DENIS O'BRIEN

PLOTINUS ON THE ORIGIN OF MATTER

An exercise in the interpretation of the *Enneads*

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One crucial question remains unanswered in modern interpretations of the philosophy of Plotinus: is Matter included among the products which derive from the One?
In this essay, Dr O'Brien provides a succinct statement of his own answer to this question, and also attempts to show where other scholars have gone wrong in their understanding of this very important feature of the philosophy of the *Enneads*.

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ELENCHOS

Collana di testi e studi sul pensiero antico

diretta da

GABRIELE GIANNANTONI

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UB Augsburg

DENIS O'BRIEN

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An exercise in the interpretation of the *Enneads*

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diretto da GABRIELE GIANNANTONI

to Dru
from Denis

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INTRODUCTION

There has recently been some controversy over an important point in the interpretation of the *Enneads*: whether, for Plotinus as for later Neoplatonists, matter is generated and whether therefore the philosophy of the *Enneads* is a philosophy of "émanation intégrale", or whether, for Plotinus as for Aristotle, matter is ungenerated and whether therefore, in the philosophy of the *Enneads*, matter alone is not included among the products which flow, directly or indirectly, from the One.

Since I first came to a reading of the *Enneads* (at the shockingly advanced age of thirty-two), my own belief has been that matter, for Plotinus, is generated, and that the *Enneads* do therefore constitute a philosophy of "émanation intégrale". I even ventured to commit this belief to writing, in a couple of articles where I touched on the question incidentally to the treatment of two other problems in the philosophy of the *Enneads*: Plotinus' criticism of the Gnostics and his attempted solution to the problem of evil[1].

I am naturally very flattered that these passing remarks of mine should have attracted the attention, not only of Dr H.-R. Schwyzer, edi-

[1] *Plotinus and the Gnostics on the generation of matter*, in H. J. BLUMENTHAL, R. A. MARKUS (ed.), *Neoplatonism and early Christian thought*, Essays in honour of A. H. Armstrong, London 1981, pp. 108-23. *Plotinus on evil: a study of matter and the soul in Plotinus' conception of human evil*, in *Le Néoplatonisme*, Colloques internationaux du Centre national de la recherche scientifique (Royaumont, 9-13 juin 1969), pp. 113-46. I shall refer to these two articles as *Plotinus on evil* and *Plotinus and the Gnostics*. On the question of the generation of matter, see esp. *Plotinus on evil*, pp. 127-8 and p. 136; *Plotinus and the Gnostics*, p. 113 and p. 121 (= note 19).

tor (with the Reverend Paul Henry, S. J.) of the first and only edition of the *Enneads* worthy of the name, but no less of an up-and-coming young Canadian scholar, Kevin Corrigan[2].

It is true that the attention lavished on my *obiter dicta* might have filled a less modest and more sensitive soul than mine with feelings, not so much of flattery, as of dismay: for I must at once own up to the reader that both Dr Schwyzer and Kevin Corrigan are of the opinion that my reading of the *Enneads* is utterly erroneous, both in its general conclusion and in its interpretation of particular texts.

What is really very curious, however, is that that is virtually the only point on which my two critics are in formal agreement: for while both disagree with O'Brien, they manage nonetheless to disagree also with each other. Thus Dr Schwyzer thinks that I am wrong to suppose that matter has been generated in the *Enneads*, and claims even that in a number of places Plotinus has explicitly disowned such a theory, while Kevin Corrigan, so far from thinking that Plotinus has explicitly disowned a theory of "émanation intégrale", finds in the *Enneads* not one kind of matter (other than intelligible matter), but several, and not one type of generation, but many, and castigates me therefore for resting content with a single kind of matter (other than intelligible matter) and with only one type of generation.

Several generations of matter (Corrigan). No generation of matter (Schwyzer). One might well have thought that no other avenue of attack lay open to my critics. But human ingenuity is not so easily exhausted. No less severe than the criticisms lavished on my understanding of the *Enneads* by Kevin Corrigan are the blistering and dismissive pages which another young Canadian scholar, J.-M. Narbonne, devotes to the refutation of a theory which he graces with my name, in an (as

[2] H.-R. Schwyzer, *Zu Plotins Deutung der sogenannten platonischen Materie*, in *Zetesis*, album amicorum [...] aangeboden aan Prof. Dr E. de Strycker, Antwerpen/Utrecht 1973, pp. 266-80. For Henry and Schwyzer's edition of the *Enneads*, see the note at the end of this Introduction. K. Corrigan, *Is there more than one Generation of Matter in the Enneads?*, « Phronesis », xxxi (1986) pp. 167-81. I shall from now on give Corrigan's name alone for page references from this article.

yet) unpublished thesis, shortly to be presented at the University of the Sorbonne[3].

Monsieur Narbonne achieves the (at first sight) extraordinary feat of combining the criticisms directed against me by both Dr Schwyzer and Kevin Corrigan, for Narbonne believes that there are places in the *Enneads* where Plotinus explicitly denies the generation of matter, and other places where Plotinus no less explicitly affirms the theory which he has elsewhere denied... But it would be unfair of me to criticise in detail a thesis which has not yet been published. It is also, perhaps, unnecessary, for J.-M. Narbonne can be right, only if neither Dr Schwyzer nor Kevin Corrigan is wrong[4].

I hope therefore that the reader will be satisfied if, in the pages which follow, I restrict myself to the simplest possible statement of my own interpretation, followed by a rather longer (but no doubt still all too brief) examination of the interpretations which have been proposed in opposition to my own by Dr Schwyzer and by Kevin Corrigan.

In trying to be brief, I know that I have sometimes been flippant; I only hope that I have nowhere been too unkind. As the years rush by, patience wears thin, and I am now less inclined than I ever was to suffer fools gladly. The tone of my remarks is in any case hardly important. I shall be more than content if, whether despite or because

[3] J.-M. Narbonne, *Le problème de la matière chez Plotin: essai sur la problématique plotinienne*. In more than one place the theories criticised by Narbonne I would hardly have recognised as my own had I not seen references to my name and publications staring at me from the printed page.

[4] I mean by this perhaps too laconic statement that J.-M. Narbonne has to agree both with Dr Schwyzer that Plotinus denies the generation of matter, and with Kevin Corrigan that he asserts the generation of matter, not that he has to believe in the elaborate paraphernalia of different kinds of matter and of different types of generation advanced in Corrigan's interpretation of Plotinus. I might therefore as well have said that Narbonne has to agree with both Schwyzer and myself... But I fear that the author might have found that suggestion even more offensive than the idea that he should be in agreement with Corrigan. — In his thesis, J.-M. Narbonne refers to an article, *Plotin et le problème de la génération de la matière; à propos d'un article récent*, « Dionysius », xi (1987) pp. 3-31. Despite my best endeavours, this article was not available to me at the time when I wrote the present monograph (the spring and summer of 1988).

of the style of my argument, the reader is encouraged to take greater pains than he might otherwise have done over a careful and critical study of the text of the *Enneads*[5].

La Perrière
September, 1988

[5] The text of the *Enneads* quoted in the chapters which follow is that of P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, *Plotini opera*, Paris/Bruxelles/Leiden 1951-73, 3 vols. The same editors have produced an edition for the « Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca oxoniensis », Oxonii 1964-82, 3 vols. These two editions are conventionally referred to as the *editio maior* and the *editio minor*. In transcribing the text of the *editio maior*, I have included occasional corrections taken from the *editio minor*. (For example, in my first quotation, in the footnote but one following this, the *editio maior* has incorrectly printed the first occurrence of ἄν with an acute accent.) Very rarely, in order to make the sequence of ideas clearer, I have added to the punctuation given by Henry and Schwyzer.

Chapter I

MY OWN INTERPRETATION

Earlier treatises

The reason why there should be controversy at all over the origin of matter in the *Enneads* lies partly in the intrinsic difficulty which besets any attempt to unravel the intricacies of what is surely the most obscure, and certainly still the least understood, of all major philosophical texts which have survived from the ancient world. There is however another, more immediate reason for uncertainty. Plotinus himself, in his earlier treatises, alludes more than once to the question of the origin of matter, but each time very curiously shies away from saying just what it is that he holds to be true[1].

Thus in his treatise *On immortality*, the second in chronological order, Plotinus writes that without soul there would be no body, and then adds, one might think with almost deliberate provocation, that, without soul, « perhaps there would not even be any matter at all »[2].

In his tenth treatise, *On the three hypostases which rank as principles*, Plotinus writes, equally coyly and equally mysteriously, that, after the generation of soul by Intellect, the soul herself is also a productive princi-

[1] I think there was a reason for Plotinus' reticence on this point; if I can find the time, I shall write on the subject in *Porphyre, 'La Vie de Plotin'*, II, Paris, (forthcoming).

[2] *Enn.* IV 7 [2] 2-3; see esp. 3. 24-25 (τάχα δ' ἂν οὐδ' ἂν ἡ ὕλη τὸ παράπαν εἴη).

ple, generating things « which are necessarily inferior to soul »[3]. « We shall have to speak of this later », he says[4].

The reference is picked up in the following treatise, the eleventh in chronological order, entitled *On the origin and order of things which come after the first*[5]. The soul that comes forth from Intellect here generates an "image" of herself, which is said to be "sensation" and the "nature" which is found in plants[6]. « Does this soul generate nothing ? » Plotinus then asks[7]. « Or does she generate that in which she is ? »[8]

Various investigations and *On the daimon who has taken charge of us*

The suspense is broken in two nearly successive treatises: *Various investigations*, Plotinus' thirteenth treatise, and *On the daimon who has*

[3] *Enn.* v 1 [10] 7; see esp. 7. 47-48 (μᾶλλον δὲ γεννῶν καὶ αὐτό, ἃ ψυχῆς ἀνάγκη εἶναι χείρονα).

[4] *Ibid.* 7. 48 (περὶ ὧν ὕστερον λεκτέον). I hope it will be clear, from my quotations of the Greek, that, when no serious point of interpretation is at issue, I do not translate the original word-for-word. For example, in the sentence preceding this, I translate a noun by an adverb (ἀνάγκη, "necessarily"), and in the final sentence of the paragraph I have turned a subordinate clause (περὶ ὧν) into a main clause, and I have put the impersonal verb into a personal form (λεκτέον, "we..."). As Aristotle perhaps implies (or should have done, if he didn't; cfr. *eth. nic.* A 1. 1094 a 23-27), it is the sign of an uneducated man to strive for more accuracy than is required by the matter in hand. My aim here is not to offer snippets of a would-be literal translation of the *Enneads*; it is to seek to determine a major point of doctrine in the philosophy of Plotinus. I shall (try to) be punctilious where my argument requires it.

[5] *Enn.* v 2 [11].

[6] *Ibid.* 1. 18-21 (γεννᾷ εἴδωλον αὐτῆς αἴσθησιν καὶ φύσιν τὴν ἐν τοῖς φυτοῖς).

[7] *Ibid.* 2. 29-30 (τί οὖν ἡ ἐν τοῖς φυτοῖς γενομένη; οὐδὲν γεννᾷ;). I take the "nature" which is found in plants (1. 21: φύσιν τὴν ἐν τοῖς φυτοῖς) to be the same as the "soul" which comes to be in plants (2. 29-30: ἡ ἐν τοῖς φυτοῖς γενομένη, *scil.* ψυχή). For the supplement (2. 30: ψυχή), cfr. 2. 4-5 (ὅταν οὖν ψυχὴ ἐν φυτῷ γίνηται).

[8] *Ibid.* 2. 30 (ἢ ἐν ᾧ ἐστι). I have translated this second sentence as a question. It could also be taken as an affirmation: « Yes; she generates that in which she is ». The particle (ἤ) is regularly used in both ways by Plotinus; see J. H. Sleeman, G. Pollet, *Lexicon plotinianum*, Leiden 1980, *s.v.*, coll. 472-3. The assertoric form (adopted by Henry and Schwyzer) leaves the meaning of the sentence (the precise reference of « that in which she is ») hardly less mysterious.

taken charge of us, the fifteenth treatise[9]. In this latter treatise (the fifteenth), the soul which is an "image" of the higher soul generates "absolute indefiniteness", while in *Various investigations* a "partial" soul generates "what is indefinite" and "what is not"[10].

The paradox in this last expression ("what is not") is clearly resolved in the light of Plotinus' reading of Plato's *Sophist*[11]. Plotinus distinguishes no less than three kinds of non-being[12]. He takes over from Plato the idea that "otherness" is non-being[13]. He retains the

[9] *Various investigations* is *enn.* III 9 [13]. *On the daimon* etc. is *enn.* III 4 [15].

[10] In his treatise *On the daimon* (*enn.* III 4 [15]), Plotinus does not repeat the word "image" of the soul which is generated by the higher soul, but when he says that the (higher) soul generates « the sensation which is in an hypostasis (αἴσθησιν τὴν ἐν ὑποστάσει) » (1. 2-3) and « nature and right down to plants (καὶ φύσιν καὶ μέχρι φυτῶν) », it is plain enough that he refers to the same (lower) manifestation of soul (an "image" of the higher soul) as that which he had spoken of in *enn.* v 2 [11] 1. 18-21 (quoted above). This soul generates something « totally other than herself (γεννᾷ πάντη ἕτερον αὑτῆς) » (*enn.* III 4 [15] 1. 6), which a few lines later is said to be « absolute indefiniteness (ἀοριστίαν [...] παντελῆ) » (1. 11-12). — In *Various investigations* (*enn.* III 9 [13]), a « partial soul (ἡ μερική, *scil.* ψυχή) » (3. 7-8) generates « what is not » or « non-being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) » (3. 11), which in the following line is specified as « what is indefinite (τὸ ἀόριστον) » (3. 12). — For both treatises, I have used the word "generates". In the treatise *On the daimon*, the verb used in the Greek is γεννᾶν, in various forms (*enn.* III 4 [15] 1), while in *Various investigations* the verb used is ποιεῖν (*enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 10). The distinction (if in this context there is one) is incidental to my thesis.

[11] I refer here to that part of the *Sophist* which begins with the Eleatic Stranger's criticisms of Parmenides and with the study of non-being (237 A sqq.). Plotinus' "reading" of this part of the *Sophist* I shall illustrate particularly from a passage in the treatise *On evils* (*enn.* I 8 [51] 3. 3-9), where Plotinus' allusion to the *Sophist*, though obvious enough, is only implicit. An inventory of other, more literal (*i.e.* word-for-word) references to the *Sophist* may be found in the third volume of P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, *Plotini opera*, cit., p. 455 (*Index fontium*).

[12] *Enn.* I 8 [51] 3. 3-9 (cfr. the preceding footnote).

[13] To single out "otherness" as non-being (I simplify somewhat), Plotinus refers to Plato's analysis of movement and rest, *soph.* 254 D sqq.; see *enn.* I 8 [51] 3. 6-9 (the "third" kind of non-being is "other" than being, but not in the way in which this is true for movement and rest: μὴ ὂν δὲ οὕτι τὸ παντελῶς μὴ ὄν, ἀλλ' ἕτερον μόνον τοῦ ὄντος· οὐχ οὕτω δὲ μὴ ὂν ὡς κίνησις καὶ στάσις ἡ περὶ τὸ ὄν).

notion (also found in Plato, but overlooked by the commentators) of "absolute non-being", *i.e.* what is simply nothing at all (if that seems to smack of a contradiction in terms, then that is just what Plato — and Parmenides — said it was)[14]. And between these two kinds of non-being, Plotinus adds a third, the non-being which is matter[15]. Matter "is not" because it is absolute indefiniteness, pure potentiality; it never really is (nor ever becomes) anything "actual" at all[16].

For anyone who has even a nodding acquaintance with the *Enneads*, and certainly for any one of the inner circle of disciples who had already been taught by Plotinus at Rome for well over a decade, the meaning of the expressions I have quoted from *Various investigations* and from the treatise *On the daimon* would therefore have been at once clear: when the soul generates "non-being", she generates matter[17].

[14] « Absolute non-being ». In his criticism of Parmenides, Plato writes of « what is not in any way at all (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν) » (*soph.* 237 B 7-8) as what would be, impossibly, « the contrary of being (τοὐναντίον τοῦ ὄντος) » (cfr. 258 E 6-259 A 1). This (I believe) is synonymous with what Plotinus here calls « absolute non-being » (*enn.* I 8 [51] 3. 6-7: of the "third" kind of non-being, μὴ ὂν δὲ οὕτι τὸ παντελῶς μὴ ὄν). See also note 17 below. — For Plato's account of « what is not in any way at all » as a contradiction in terms, see especially the first part of his criticism of Parmenides, *soph.* 237 B 10 sqq. For the interpretation adopted here of Parmenides, see the first volume of *Études sur Parménide*, Paris 1987, I, pp. 135 sqq. (*Essai critique*).

[15] In the lines quoted so far (*enn.* I 8 [51] 3), Plotinus writes merely of the third kind of non-being as an « image of being (εἰκὼν τοῦ ὄντος) » (3. 8), « or even more on the way to not being (ἢ καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον μὴ ὄν) » (3. 9). But in the lines preceding as elsewhere he describes matter specifically in terminology taken from the *Sophist*. Matter is « really not being (ὄντως [...] μὴ ὄν) » (*enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 24-25; cfr. *soph.* 254 D 1, 258 E 3); it is « truly not being (ἀληθινῶς μὴ ὄν) » (*enn.* III 6 [26] 7. 12-13; this use of the adverb is taken from the description of the *logos* which is « truly false, ἀληθῶς [...] ψευδής, » *soph.* 263 D 4; cfr. *resp.* 382 A 4); it is « a form which is of what is not (εἶδός τι τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ὄν) » (*enn.* I 8 [51] 3. 4-5; cfr. *soph.* 258 D 6). In the passage last quoted, Plotinus speaks of « evil (τὸ κακόν) » (3. 2); but "evil" is here synonymous with matter, as the following chapters of the treatise will make clear.

[16] For this account of matter, see chapters 6-16 of the treatise *On matter* (*enn.* II 4 [12]), the final two chapter of the treatise *On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"* (*enn.* II 5 [25] 4-5), and chapters 10 to 14 of the treatise *On the impassibility of incorporeals* (*enn.* III 6 [26]).

[17] Plotinus spent ten years teaching at Rome before he started to put his ideas into writing (the years 244-53 A.D.; see *Vita*, 3); the first twenty-one treatises (and

LATER TREATISES

In the remaining treatises of the Plotinian corpus there are several other allusions to the generation of matter, but expressed rather more obliquely.

For example, in the first book of *Puzzles about the soul*, Plotinus writes that « at the outermost limits of the fire », which here as elsewhere is an image of the One and of the products that flow from the One,

so including treatises 13 and 15) were completed in the ten years that followed (254-63 A.D.; see *Vita*, 4). The most reliable study of the chronology of the *Vita Plotini* is that by R. GOULET, *Le système chronologique de la 'Vie de Plotin'*, in *Porphyre, 'La Vie de Plotin'*, I, Travaux préliminaires et index grec complet (« Histoire des doctrines de l'Antiquité classique » 6), Paris 1982, pp. 187-227. — In order to keep the preceding paragraphs as simple as possible, I have relied, for the distinction between the three kinds of "non-being", on a single passage from the treatise *On evils* (see p. 17 note 11 above), joined to a couple of other passages where the "non-being" of matter is described in terms taken from Plato's *Sophist* (p. 18 note 15 above). There are of course many other places where Plotinus refers to the "non-being" of matter, and in particular where he distinguishes the "non-being" of matter from other kinds of non-being. For example, in the early treatise *On the Good or the One* (*enn.* VI 9 [9] 11. 35-38), Plotinus distinguishes implicitly between "absolute non-being" and the "non-being" of matter when he writes that the soul, in her descent, arrives at "evil" (which here as elsewhere is synonymous with matter, κἀκεῖ μὲν ἥκουσα εἰς κακὸν ἥξει), « and in that sense at non-being (καὶ οὕτως εἰς μὴ ὄν) », but adds emphatically that she does not therefore arrive at "non-being absolute" (11. 35-38; at the beginning of the sentence: οὐ γὰρ δὴ εἰς τὸ πάντη μὴ ὂν ἥξει, and at the end: οὐκ εἰς τὸ παντελὲς μὴ ὄν). — The same expression recurs in the treatise *On the impassibility of incorporeals* (*enn.* III 6 [26]). Plotinus is here taken up with the problem of how matter, though pure potentiality and utterly impassive, is nonetheless the substrate of sensible objects. In stating this problem, Plotinus writes that « absolute non-being cannot be mingled with being (τὸ δὲ πάντη μὴ ὂν ἀμικτέον τῷ ὄντι) » (14. 20-21). A superficial reading might lead one to suppose that "absolute non-being" is here used synonymously with matter, and inconsistently therefore with its use in the treatise *On the Good or the One*. But the point is rather that Plotinus means to face us with a puzzle; the solution implied to the puzzle is that matter, although it is "non-being", is not "non-being absolute", and is not therefore altogether "unmingled with being". (In the same context, and in the same spirit, Plotinus asks how matter can « participate without participating », 14. 21-22, and the solution is again to distinguish between total lack of anything that could be called participating and participation proper. On this point, see further pp. 71-3 below.)

« light became darkness »[18]. Darkness (here as frequently) is a synonym for matter, and the odd idea that light should "become" darkness I strongly suspect is meant to exclude the idea that light is surrounded by a darkness which exists independently of the light[19].

That idea — the idea of a pre-existing and independently existing darkness — is part of the Gnostic belief, a belief which Plotinus strains every nerve to eradicate from the minds of his followers, resorting to caustic denunciations of the Gnostics' arrogance, their barbarity and their wilful stupidity in language unlike anything which is found elsewhere in the *Enneads*[20].

Twice in his criticism of the Gnostics Plotinus' argument is designed to extract from his adversaries the admission that soul "has made matter", or that matter "follows as a necessary consequence" from principles prior to matter[21]. These are two sides of the same coin (for the soul's

[18] *Enn.* IV 3 [27] 9. 23-26 (φῶς [...] σκότος ἐγίνετο). For "fire" as an image of the products that flow from the One, see, for example, *enn.* IV 8 [6] 3. 19-21; IV 3 [27] 10. 5-9.

[19] For darkness as a synonym of matter, see SLEEMAN and POLLET, *Lexicon plotinianum*, *s.v.* σκότος, coll. 939-40, where the majority of references have to do in one way or another with matter. The image is especially frequent in the treatise *Against the Gnostics* (*enn.* II 9 [33] 10-12). The « darkness of matter (σκότος ὕλης) » (*enn.* V 1 [10] 2. 26) is, for Plotinus, almost a pleonasm.

[20] For Plotinus' denunciations of the Gnostics, see *enn.* II 9 [33] 6 and 8-10; cfr. *Vita*, 16. The following words, all used pejoratively of the Gnostics, their ideas and the way they express them, are not found elsewhere in the *Enneads*: ἀγροικία (9. 46); ἀργοικίζεσθαι (9. 26); αὐθάδεια (9. 55); ἀπαυθαδίζεσθαι (10. 11); διασύρειν (6. 3 and 44; 10. 13); ἔκφρων (8. 39); ἐπισκότησις (10. 30); καινολογεῖν (6. 5); καινοτομία (6. 11); καταφεύδεσθαι (6. 25); λοιδορία (8. 7); σκευωρεῖσθαι (6. 7). — The abrupt change of tone can be paralleled from Simplicius. Normally a mild-mannered gentleman, Simplicius lets rip when he has to defend Aristotle against the Christians (in the person of Philoponus); see *De caelo*, 25. 23 sqq. The Gnostics' belief in a pre-existing and independently existing darkness (matter) may be inferred from the form of criticism which Plotinus makes of them at *enn.* II 9 [33] 12. 39-44; on this point, see further the footnotes following this.

[21] Soul « has made matter », see *enn.* II 9 [33] 12. 39-44 (matter is here spoken of as "darkness"). Matter « follows as a necessary consequence »: *ibid.* 3. 15-18. On this latter passage, see *Plotinus and the Gnostics*, esp. pp. 111-12 and 115-17.

generation of matter we may suppose to be as "necessary" as is Intellect's generation of soul)[22]. It would have been most oddly perverse of Plotinus to want his opponents to abandon their instinctive belief in an independently existing matter and to adopt instead the belief in matter as generated by soul, — if that new position had not been essentially the same as Plotinus' own[23].

THE ORIGIN OF MATTER AND THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

Plotinus returns to the generation of matter by soul in one of his last treatises, *On what evils are and where they come from*, a poignant title when we realise that Plotinus was at the time alone in Campania, suffering from the ravages of the illness which was soon to bring his earthly life to an end[24].

The main burden of this treatise is a complex one, and it is perhaps not surprising (since Plotinian studies are still in their infancy) that most modern commentators have tried to glide over the surface of these com-

[22] The generation of soul by Intellect is first described in *enn.* V 1 [10] 3. The description follows closely the account given of the generation of Intellect by the One (*enn.* V 4 [7]), where the general principle of emanation is cast specifically in terms of necessity (see esp. 2. 27-33; cfr. *enn.* II 9 [33] 8. 20-25).

[23] For the Gnostics' "instinctive" belief in an independently existing matter, see the turn given to Plotinus' criticism of the Gnostics at *enn.* II 9 [33] 12. 39-44 (this is the same as the passage quoted in my last footnote but one). Please note: I say only that the Gnostics' "new" position would be "essentially" the same as Plotinus' own. My adverbs are not tossed in lightly; even when Plotinus has persuaded the Gnostics to accept a generation of matter by the soul, it does not follow that "Gnostic" generation and "Plotinian" generation will from then on be identical. But the reader who would like to know wherein exactly lies the difference will have to wait for my thrilling new publication, *Théodicée plotinienne, théodicée gnostique*. — A second *caveat*: the argumentative presentation of the theory of a generation of matter is not the same in the two passages I have quoted (*enn.* II 9 [33] 3. 15-18 and 12. 39-44). For the difference between them, see my article *The origin of matter and the origin of evil in Plotinus' criticism of the Gnostics*, shortly to appear in a collection of essays published in honour of Pierre Aubenque.

[24] *Enn.* I 8 [51]. The biographical details may be gleaned from *Vita*, 2 and 6.

plexities with urbane generalities and soothing reassurances[25]. However the only point which concerns us here is that matter is made both the "primary" evil and cause of evil in the soul[26]. This is so, Plotinus tells us, « even if the soul herself generated matter »[27].

These words mean no more, and no less than what they say. They are not a covert denial of generation, as though Plotinus had written "even if soul *had* generated matter" (the form of sentence and the context more generally show that the protasis is in a "real" and not an "unreal" form). And Plotinus does not say (here) that the soul did generate matter. He writes: "even if...". The condition is left open.

But of course the implied answer can easily be filled in by anyone who has already read the rest of the *Enneads*. The soul did generate matter; even so, matter is the "primary" evil and cause of evil in the soul.

Intelligible matter and the matter of the sensible world

One could continue with many other passages scattered throughout the *Enneads* where what Plotinus says and argues for (for Plotinus is above

[25] For example, A. H. Armstrong writes, in *The Cambridge history of later Greek and early Medieval philosophy*, Cambridge 1967, p. 255: « Plotinus firmly resolves the contradiction which appears in Plato's thought between the ideas of embodiment as a fall of the soul and as a good and necessary fulfilment of its function to care for the body, by maintaining that it is both ». — May I suggest to the modern doxographer a little test? Read that sentence again and then tell me whether Armstrong means that Plotinus succeeds in firmly resolving the contradiction, or only thinks that he succeeds. For the answer, turn to Atti del convegno internazionale sul tema: *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*, published by the Accademia nazionale dei Lincei (« *Problemi attuali di scienza e di cultura* ») anno 371, Roma 1974, p. 189 note 30 *sub finem*. (And if you get the answer wrong, as I did, reflect sadly on why the leading English exponent of modern Christian Neoplatonism should have expressed himself so ambiguously in the first place and on why he should now wish to correct himself on the point.)

[26] *Enn.* I 8 [51] 14. 49-54.

[27] *Enn.* I 8 [51] 14. 51 (καὶ γὰρ εἰ αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχὴ τὴν ὕλην ἐγέννησε). On this sentence, see *Plotinus on evil*, pp. 135-9. The point of the sentence, in its context, is that matter is "primary" evil and cause of evil in the soul even if it was soul which generated matter in the first place and was thus, indirectly, herself the cause of her downfall.

all a philosopher of argument) makes much better sense if matter is generated than if it is not; but I will add only one passage more, which is peculiar in so far as it comes before the two treatises where Plotinus comes clean on his theory of the generation of matter by soul (*i.e.* before the two treatises *Various investigations* and *On the daimon who has taken charge of us*)[28].

This earlier passage occurs in the quintessentially Plotinian treatise *On the descent of soul into bodies*[29]. Plotinus here offers two branches of a single alternative: either matter always existed, and in that case, since it "is", it is not possible for it not to "participate" in the goodness that flows ultimately from the One; or the generation of matter follows "of necessity" from principles prior to matter, and in that case, even though (by implication) it cannot "participate", and so cannot share directly in the goodness which comes from the One, even so, it does not have to stand wholly "apart", as though it were altogether out of reach of the One[30].

These rather cryptic expressions are easily enough understood in the light of Plotinus' theory on the nature of "participation". The matter of the sensible world cannot truly "participate" (Plotinus asks: how can it « participate without participating » ?), because it cannot become wholly united with form[31]. If it could, it would cease to be pure potentiality, and so would no longer be matter[32]. Instead of "participating", matter is covered by soul with the mere appearance of form[33]. This is what Plotinus refers to when he says, in *The descent*, that matter does not stand wholly "apart" (the conclusion to the second branch of the alternative)[34]. The matter of the sensible world looks pretty enough,

[28] These two treatises are *enn.* III 9 [13] and III 4 [15].

[29] *Enn.* IV 8 [6] 6. 16-23. On this passage, see *Plotinus and the Gnostics*.

[30] Since it « is (οὖσαν) » (6. 19). « Participate (μετασχεῖν) » (6. 19). « Of necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης) » (6. 20-21).. « Apart (χωρίς) » (6.22).

[31] *Enn.* III 6 [26] 14; see esp. 14. 21-22 (θαῦμα τὸ χρῆμα γίγνεται, πῶς μὴ μετέχον μετέχει). I return to this point in my criticism of Corrigan (ch. VI below).

[32] This is the conclusion Plotinus reaches in the final chapter of his treatise *On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"* (*enn.* II 5 [25] 5). The same conclusions are implied in the final two chapters of the treatise *On matter* (*enn.* II 4 [12] 15-16).

[33] *Enn.* III 6 [26] 11; see esp. 11. 29-31.

[34] *Enn.* IV 8 [6] 6. 21-22 (quoted above).

once it has been covered by soul with form, but beneath that covering of form matter remains what it always was and always will be, a dead thing, inert, lifeless and incapable of giving life[35]. In a gripping metaphor, alluded to more than once, the matter of the sensible world is « a corpse adorned »[36].

By my repeated references to the matter of the sensible world, the percipient reader will already have guessed that there is in Plotinus more than one matter[37]. In the intelligible world, "matter" is generated by the "otherness" and the "primal movement" (references again to Plotinus' reading of Plato's *Sophist*), which have sprung from the One. Plotinus does not say of this matter that it is unable to "participate"[39]. On the contrary, "divine" matter is joined to form, and the union of intelligible matter and intelligible form makes up a « reality bathed in light », « endowed with intelligible life »[40].

[35] Matter is lifeless: that is why the « absolute indefiniteness » engendered by soul in the opening chapter of the treatise *On the daimon* is « an offspring without life (τὸ γεννώμενον ἄζων) » (*enn.* III 4 [15] 1.7); and why, in *Various investigations*, the non-being engendered by soul cannot turn itself towards its source, but has to wait, so to speak, for a « second initiative » on the part of soul in order to be covered by form (*enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 15-16). Matter is incapable of giving life: on the sterility of matter, see, for example, *enn.* III 6 [26] 19. 17 sqq.; cfr. *enn.* II 9 [33] 8. 24-27.

[36] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 18 (νεκρὸν κεκοσμημένον). The precise conjunction of ideas does not occur elsewhere, but in his treatise *On the three hypostases which rank as principles*, Plotinus writes, for example, that soul « adorned » the *ouranos* (ἐκόσμησεν, *enn.* V 1 [10] 2.5), and that, prior to the advent of soul, the *ouranos* was « inert body (σῶμα νεκρόν) » (2. 25-26). The image is partly explained by Plotinus' tending to treaty any "inanimate" body as a "corpse" (see, for example, *enn.* IV 7 [2] 9. 23-24; cfr. *enn.* III 6 [26] 6. 46-48).

[37] Hence the ambiguity in Corrigan's title (cfr. p. 12 note 2 above): *Is there more than one Generation of Matter in the Enneads?* Does Corrigan mean to ask whether both kinds of matter are generated, or whether there is more than one generation for each of the two kinds of matter? For the answer (in so far as there is one) see p. 28 note 2 below and ch. IV below.

[38] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 28-30. Matter is "generated"; Plotinus here uses the verb ποιεῖν (5. 29). See p. 17 note 10 above, *sub finem*. For the (implied) reference to the *Sophist*, see p. 17 note 13 above.

[39] If my interpretation is adopted of the passage from *The descent* (*enn.* IV 8 [6] 6. 16-23), then the matter of the intelligible world cannot *not* participate; see the footnote at the end of my next paragraph.

[40] Plotinus contrasts the relation of the two kinds of matter to form in *enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 12-23. « Divine » matter (5. 15: ἡ μὲν γὰρ θεία, *scil.* ὕλη). A « reality bathed in light (πεφωτισμένη οὐσία) » (5. 23). « Endowed with intelligible life (ἡ μὲν γὰρ θεία [*scil.* ὕλη], λαβοῦσα τὸ ὁρίζον αὐτήν, ζωὴν ὡρισμένην καὶ νοερὰν ἔχει) » (5. 15-16).

This concept of intelligible matter gives us the admittedly rather paradoxical explanation of the meaning of the alternative offered in Plotinus' earlier treatise, *On the descent of soul into bodies*[41]. Scholars have perhaps not unnaturally thought that they had to choose: which of the two versions of matter offered in that treatise corresponds to Plotinus' own belief[42]? The answer is both. The matter which follows "of necessity" from principles prior to itself, and which, even though it does not "participate", does not wholly stand "apart", is the matter of the sensible world[43]. The matter which, since it "is", cannot not "participate" in goodness, is intelligible matter[44].

Both types of matter are generated. Intelligible matter is generated by "otherness" and by "primal movement"[45]. The matter of the sensible world is generated by "partial" soul, the sensitive and vegetative principle which « comes to be in plants » and which animates the Earth[46].

[41] *Enn.* IV 8 [6] 6.16-23.

[42] For the various interpretations of the passage offered by modern scholars, see *Plotinus and the Gnostics*, pp. 109-10.

[43] This is the *second* branch of the alternative (*enn.* IV 8 [6] 6. 20-23); see p. 23 note 30 above.

[44] This is the *first* branch of the alternative (*enn.* IV 8 [6] 6. 18-20); see again p. 23 note 30 above.

[45] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 28-30 (quoted above).

[46] See the analysis already given of the third chapter of *Various investigations* (*enn.* III 9 [13] 3) and of the first chapter of *On the daimon* (*enn.* III 4 [15] 1). — For the association between the soul which controls plant life and the soul which animates the Earth, see the discussion which begins at *enn.* IV 4 [28] 22.

Chapter II

DR SCHWYZER'S OBJECTIONS

So much for a brief sketch of Plotinus' ideas on the origin of matter. I shall turn in a moment, I hope not too ungratefully, to Kevin Corrigan's attempted criticism and reformulation of this outline of Plotinus' theories. But before I do so I should like first to take account, if the reader will bear with me, of an earlier set of criticisms which have been made of my interpretation by Dr H.-R. Schwyzer, for it is these criticisms which, on more than one point, have led Kevin Corrigan astray[1].

It is true that there is more than a whiff of paradox about Corrigan's falling under the influence of the older man. For although Schwyzer and Corrigan have this much in common, that they both think my reading of the *Enneads* is wholly and irretrievably mistaken, nonetheless they are totally at odds on what each of them thinks the true reading of Plotinus' philosophy should be. Thus Schwyzer thinks that there is no generation of the matter of the sensible world in the *Enneads*, and that I am quite wrong to think that soul is responsible for matter's generation, while Corrigan thinks, on the contrary, that I have not gone nearly far enough. For Corrigan believes that he has found in the *Enneads* not one, but three different manifestations of matter (not counting intel-

[1] H.-R. Schwyzer, *Zu Plotins Deutung der sogenannten platonischen Materie*, cit., pp. 266-80. Henceforward I refer to this article by Schwyzer's name alone. For Corrigan's (unconscious?) repetition of Schwyzer's errors, see esp. ch. v below. Corrigan's article has been quoted, p. 12 note 2 above.

ligible matter), and that each of these three different manifestations of matter is the result of a different type of generation[2].

Three generations of matter (Corrigan), one (myself) or none (Schwyzer); readers might well wonder how three seemingly sane and respectable students of Plotinus can have come to differ so wildly. I shall do my best to enlighten them, and even to persuade them that Plotinus is still worth reading, despite the aberrations of his modern commentators[3].

"Body" versus "matter"

Dr Schwyzer claims that in the passage I have quoted from *Various investigations* what is being described is the generation of body, not of matter[4]. He claims that the matter of the sensible world is specifically said by Plotinus not to be generated, and that the same point is in any case implicit in Plotinus' description of matter as "indestructible"[5]. And he claims finally that in the treatise *On evils* the condition is an "unreal" one, and that Plotinus means « if the soul had generated matter », implying therefore that it didn't[6].

I shall take each of these criticisms in turn, starting with the passage from the third chapter of *Various investigations*[7]. Is it true that in this chapter Plotinus describes the generation of body, not of matter?

Read the final sentence of the chapter. Plotinus here tells us that, when the soul has generated « what is indefinite » and « what is not », she « takes a second look » at what she has made (πάλιν δὲ ἰδοῦσα), and then, « as though by a second initiative (οἷον δευτέρᾳ προσβολῇ) », she « invests the image with form (τὸ εἴδωλον ἐμόρφωσε) »[8].

What all this means is clear from the end of the opening chapter of Plotinus' next treatise but one, *On the daimon who has taken charge of us*[9]. Here again, the soul generates "what is indefinite", in this case "absolute indefiniteness" and what is "utterly indefinite"[10]. After it has been generated, this absolute indefiniteness "is completed" (cfr. τελειούμενον), and « becomes body (γίνεται σωμα) », « by taking a form (μορφὴν λαβόν) », a form « which is suited to its capacity (μορφὴν [...] τὴν τῇ δυνάμει πρόσφορον) »[11].

[2] For Schwyzer's interpretation, see esp. pp. 275-6 of the article I have just quoted. Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 170, writes of « what must ultimately be sensible matter » that « there are at least two, and implicitly three, eternal, but logically progressive, moments of its unfolding or realization ». For a detailed analysis of Corrigan's statement of his thesis (which appears at times to involve no less than four different levels of what he calls "lower" matter, and as many as six different "generations" of "lower" matter), see ch. IV below.

[3] The summary in this final paragraph refers only to the generation (or lack of generation) of the matter of the sensible world. Schwyzer appears in fact to think that intelligible matter is also ungenerated (see the quotation from his article in the second footnote following this), despite Plotinus' explicit statement that intelligible matter is generated by the "otherness" and the "primal movement" which have sprung from the One (*enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 28-30, quoted above). Corrigan addresses himself to this question only obliquely, which is perhaps just as well since the passage where Plotinus in fact writes of the generation of intelligible matter (see the passage last quoted) is taken by Corrigan (pp. 169-72) to refer both to intelligible matter and to the matter of the sensible world (see the quotation from Corrigan's article given on p. 47 note 15 below, and my remarks in the final paragraphs of ch. V below).

[4] Schwyzer, *op. cit.*, p. 276: « Mit dem dortigen μὴ ὄν, εἴδωλον, πάντη σκοτεινόν ist nicht die Materie gemeint, sondern der Körper, der ja unbezweifelbar geschaffen ist, und zwar von der Seele aus ὕλη und εἶδος ». Schwyzer quotes *enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 7-16. For my interpretation of this passage, see pp. 16-18 above.

[5] Schwyzer puts these two points the other way round. He writes first, p. 276: « Das Adjektiv ἀγένητος gebraucht Plotin freilich nur für die νοητὴ ὕλη (II 4 [12] 5, 26), von der hiesigen ὕλη aber sagt er, sie sei ἀνώλεθρος (II 5 [25] 5, 34), was ἀγένητος einschliesst ». He then adds, *ibid.*: « Und kurz zuvor wird betont: ἀποστᾶσα πάντων τῶν ὄντων οὔτε ἐγένετο II, 5, 5, 14-15 ».

[6] I hope this is not too brutal a summary of Schwyzer's argument. He writes first, p. 275: « Lässt sich die Frage, ob der Satz irreal aufzufassen sei oder nicht, von der sprachlichen Seite her nicht entscheiden ». But he then adds in a footnote, p. 275 note 41: « Immerhin spricht der folgende Irreal eher dafür, auch den ersten Teil des Satzes so zu verstehen ». Schwyzer quotes *enn.* I 8 [51] 14. 51-54. For my interpretation of this passage, see pp. 21-2 above.

[7] *Enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 7 sqq.

[8] *Ibid.* 3. 15-16. In this text, Plotinus uses an aorist tense, in the passage next quoted he uses a present. Not to distract the reader unduly, I paraphrase in both cases by a present tense.

[9] *Enn.* III 4 [15] 1.

[10] *Ibid.* 1. 5-14.

[11] *Ibid.* 1. 14-15.

The process described in these two passages is clearly the same[12]. The "form" which the soul gives in *Various investigations* is the same as the "form" which is received in the treatise *On the daimon who has taken charge of us*. The only difference is a stylistic one: in *Various investigations*, Plotinus takes things from the point of view of soul, so that soul is the subject of his sentence (the soul « invests the image with form »); whereas in the treatise *On the daimon* he takes things from the point of view of the object which has been generated by soul, so that it is "what is indefinite" or "what is utterly indefinite" which now, as subject of the sentence, "receives form" and "becomes body".

Once these two passages have been read together, as they should be, the distinction between matter and body is as plain as anything ever is in Plotinus. In both treatises, the "indefiniteness" which receives form to become body cannot be other than matter. The "form" which, in *Various investigations*, the soul then brings to matter is the same as the form which in the treatise *On the daimon* is "received" by matter; this is the form of body, or « bodyliness (σωματότης) », a form which takes up a good deal of Plotinus' mental energy elsewhere in the *Enneads*[13].

In the treatise *On the daimon*, the receiving of form is clearly subsequent (logically) to the soul's generation of matter: what is "utterly indefinite" (matter) can "receive form" only after it has been generated. In *Various investigations*, the (logical) sequence of events is even plainer: the soul gives form to matter "by a second initiative", because her (implied) first initiative has been the generation of the matter which is to receive the form.

Conclusion: the soul does produce body. But she produces matter first.

Matter "is not generated"

Next take Schwyzer's claim that matter is specifically said not to be generated[14]. Schwyzer refers here to the treatise entitled *On the*

[12] *Enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 15-16; III 4 [15] 1. 14-15.

[13] On the form of body, see *enn.* II 7 [37] 3. Cfr. II 4 [12] 8 sqq. (esp. cap. 12. 34-37); III 6 [26] 7. 3-5; *et alibi.*

[14] Schwyzer, *op. cit.*, p. 276 (see p. 29 note 5 above).

meaning of "in potency" and "in act"[15]. At first sight the quotation looks quite impressive: ἀποστᾶσα πάντων τῶν ὄντων οὔτε ἐγένετο. Read thus, out of context, the meaning would appear to be: « standing apart from all existent things, nor did matter come into being ».

But one only has to read the whole of the sentence, in its context, to see that the meaning and the translation of the words quoted are wholly other. Schwyzer has copied out only the second half of a sentence, which in its entirety runs thus: οὔτε δὲ ἦν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐνεργείᾳ τι ἀποστᾶσα πάντων τῶν ὄντων οὔτε ἐγένετο[16]. The meaning of ἐγένετο is now totally different: « Standing apart from all existent things, matter neither was, from the beginning, anything in act, nor did it become, *scil.* anything in act ».

This sentence is the simplest possible statement of Plotinus' claim (which occupies the whole of the final chapter of the treatise) that matter is not (« ... neither was it nor did it become ») anything "actual", because matter only ever exists (in so far as it "exists" at all) in a state of potentiality[17]. The expression οὔτε ἐγένετο is not a bold statement that matter "never came to be", as it would appear to be in Schwyzer's truncated quotation of Plotinus. The verb has a complement which Schwyzer has omitted or suppressed. The complement is τι and it is governed (or qualified) by a dative. Matter « did not become, *scil.* anything in act ».

Matter as pure potentiality

From deference to Dr Schwyzer's age and eminence, I should perhaps pursue this point more fully.

It is true that the two words ἐνεργείᾳ τι are first introduced as complement to the verb ἦν (οὔτε δὲ ἦν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐνεργείᾳ τι): « neither was it, from the beginning, anything in act »[18]. The point which

[15] *Enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 14-15.

[16] *Ibid.* 5. 13-15.

[17] *Ibid.* 5.13-36.

[18] *Ibid.* 5. 13-14 (quoted above).

Schwyzer seems not to have appreciated is that the same two words are then carried over ("understood") as complement to the second negated verb in the sentence (...οὔτε ἐγένετο): « ... nor did it become, *scil.* anything in act »[19].

And yet the preceding sentence makes it blazingly clear that this is the meaning intended. Plotinus there writes: ἀλλ' ὅπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἦν — μὴ ὂν δὲ ἦν — οὕτως ἀεὶ ἔχουσα. « But what it was from the beginning — and non-being is what it was — that is how it is forever »[20].

These words are the positive statement of which the sentence quoted by Schwyzer is the negative counterpart[21]. Plotinus first writes (in the sentence last quoted) that matter continues to be what it was from the beginning, namely non-being. He then writes conversely (in the sentence Schwyzer refers to) that matter neither was from the beginning, nor ever became, anything actually existent. The one truth implies the other: matter neither was, nor ever became, anything other than what it was and what it is[22].

Bis repetita placent.

— Matter was, and is, non-being (Plotinus' first and *positive* sentence)[23].

— It cannot therefore be, nor can it ever become, anything "in act" (Plotinus' second and *negative* sentence)[24].

— For were it to do so, it would no longer be what it was, and what it is, namely non-being (Plotinus' *negative* conclusion is implied by the previous *positive* statement of his thesis)[25].

[19] *Ibid.* 5. 15.

[20] *Ibid.* 5. 12-13. The words I have transcribed (5. 12-13) are, strictly speaking, only the second half of the sentence preceding (5. 10-13). I translate by taking over the ἐστιν from the first part of the sentence (5. 11). (The English translation is, I know, hardly elegant; but it is no more inelegant than is the Greek original.)

[21] SCHWYZER, *op. cit.*, p. 276 (quoted above); cap. 5. 13-15.

[22] *Enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 12-15.

[23] *Ibid.* 5. 12-13.

[24] *Ibid.* 5. 13-15.

[25] *Ibid.* 5. 12-15.

The grammar of the two sentences is as obvious as is the philosophy[26]. The *negative* expression which Schwyzer has quoted, « nor did it ever become (οὔτε ἐγένετο) », corresponds, nearly enough, to the *positive* expression at the end of the sentence preceding, « that is how it is forever (οὕτως ἀεὶ ἔχουσα) ». The *positive* expression picks up explicitly the complement to the verb in the first part of the sentence (οὕτως looks back to ὅπερ). And in the same way the *negative* expression carries on the complement of the verb which precedes it (ἐνεργείᾳ τι acts as complement both to οὔτε [...] ἦν and to οὔτε ἐγένετο).

To construe the sentence otherwise betrays an elementary misunderstanding of the Greek (ἐγένετο taken as an absolute use of the verb, with no complement implied or understood) coupled with a failure to follow the course of the argument (the consequences which follow from Plotinus' conception of matter as always and only pure potentiality, and as incapable therefore of ever being, or ever becoming, anything "in act").

Some people may gulp at the conclusion, but there is no point in dodging the issue. Dr Schwyzer has misunderstood both the grammar and the philosophy of the sentence he has quoted. In the words which Schwyzer has transcribed, from the final chapter of the treatise *On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"*, the question of the generation of matter, or the lack of generation, simply does not arise. Plotinus is concerned here, not with the origin of matter, but with its nature.

Hence the meaning of the participle phrase, ἀποστᾶσα πάντων τῶν ὄντων[27]. On Schwyzer's interpretation of the passage, this presumably has to mean that « matter stands apart from all existent things » because matter stands apart from the sequence of things that are generated (ultimately) from the One. But that is not at all the meaning which attaches to that expression in its context. As the preceding chapter has made clear (*enn.* II 5 [25] 4), matter is unique (it "stands apart"), not because it is ungenerated, but because it alone has no "actual" existence. Matter "exists", in so far as it exists at all, only as pure potentiality, and therefore cannot properly be included in the universe of things that "are" (cfr. πάντων τῶν ὄντων).

[26] The two sentences: 5. 12-13 and 13-15.

[27] *Ibid.*, 5. 14.

The participle phrase (*ibid.* 5. 14) thus repeats the burden of the main sentence (*ibid.* 5. 13-15): matter « stands apart from all existent things » because « from the beginning it neither was, nor ever became, anything in act »[28].

[28] The message of these two chapters (*enn.* II 5 [25] 4-5) is repeated in Plotinus' next treatise, *On the impassibility of incorporeals* (*enn.* III 6 [26], see esp. 10). In particular, the argument of *enn.* III 6 [26] 10. 11-13 repeats essentially the argument of the two sentences quoted above, from *enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 12-15. In both passages, Plotinus makes firstly the *positive* point that matter, by its very nature, is always what it was from the beginning, and secondly the *negative*, but complementary, point, that matter can never become anything other than what it was and what it is.

Chapter III

DR SCHWYZER'S OBJECTIONS CONTINUED

It would perhaps be kinder to leave things there, but I had better complete the sorry catalogue of Schwyzer's misinterpretations and misunderstandings. Error is hydra-headed, and Schwyzer's thesis will almost certainly live on to haunt the histories and hand-books if, through a misplaced sense of charity, I now leave things half done. I turn therefore to the point which is intended to bolster Schwyzer's (manifestly false) interpretation of οὔτε ἐγένετο.

"Indestructible and therefore ungenerated"

This additional argument is (at first sight) simplicity itself. Matter, Schwyzer tells us, is indestructible. It is therefore also ungenerated[1].

Let us take the first point first. Is matter indestructible? Well, yes, it is, though in a rather special sense. Not that one has to look far to find out in just what sense. Schwyzer's truncated quotation (with οὔτε ἐγένετο) was taken from the final chapter of Plotinus' treatise *On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"*[2]. At the end of that same chapter, Plotinus explains that, if *per impossibile* matter were ever to become anything "in act", then it would cease to be itself. For matter to continue as itself, matter must continue to be pure potentiality. The

[1] Schwyzer, *op. cit.*, p. 276 (see p. 29 note 5 above).
[2] *Enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 13-15.

potentiality of matter, and its impassibility, is a condition and (for Plotinus) a guarantee of its indestructibility[3]. This is the context in which Plotinus uses the expression quoted by Dr Schwyzer: matter is ἀνώλεθρος[4].

But does "indestructible" imply "ungenerated"? Dr Schwyzer does not tell us from what source he has culled that principle (indestructible, therefore ungenerated). It has in fact a long history, at least if we include the obverse form of the principle (ungenerated, therefore indestructible). Parmenides may have said something of the sort[5]. Plato certainly did, and Aristotle formalised the principle in the concluding chapter of the first book of the *De caelo*[6].

Was the principle still thought to be valid at the time that Plotinus was writing? Atticus had thrown it over, and Porphyry was to do the same[7]. Saint Athanasius gives the principle a peculiar twist. He would need to. Good Christian that he was, he hoped and believed in immortality, but had no pretensions to having been uncreated. Athanasius' idiosyncratic theory of a "double" creation is indeed designed to show how the human soul, although it has been created, can nonetheless be by nature immortal[8].

[3] *Ibid.* 5. 19-36.

[4] *Ibid.* 5. 34.

[5] PARM. fr. 8, 3. For my interpretation of this moment in Parmenides' argument, see *Études sur Parménide*, Paris 1987, I, pp. 171 sqq.; II, pp. 135 sqq., esp. p. 155. See also the following footnote.

[6] PLAT. *Phaedr.* 245 C sqq. ARISTOT. *de cael.* A 12. 282 a 25-b 5. Plato takes up the principle in the form which Parmenides may have given to it (if we so understand fr. 8, 3): ungenerated, therefore indestructible. Aristotle's formalisation of the principle works both ways: what has no end has no beginning, and what has no beginning has no end.

[7] ATTIC. fr. 4, 11, ed. Des Places. PORPH. *senten.* 14, ed. Lamberz. Atticus and Porphyry are interested in the principle as Schwyzer has stated it (indestructible, therefore ungenerated).

[8] Athanasius adopts (implicitly) Aristotle's axiom, *de inc. Verb.* 4. 6, ed. R. W. Thompson; ed. C. Kannengiesser (= *PG 25*, col. 104 C); but gives it a peculiar twist, with his theory of a "double" creation, *de inc. Verb.* 3. 3 (*PG 25*, col. 101 A-B); cfr. *contra gent.* 41, ed. R. W. Thompson (= *PG 25*, coll. 81 C-84 B). I hope I have whetted the reader's appetite enough for him to want to read my article, *L'immortalité chez saint Athanase ('De incarnatione Verbi' cap. 4. 5; PG 25, col. 104 B-C)*, forthcoming in the Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford, 24-29 August 1987).

But I digress. Back to Plotinus: does "indestructible" imply "ungenerated" in the *Enneads*?

Plotinus, as you might expect, is too sophisticated to answer that question with a simple "yes" or "no". Or rather the question as I (and Schwyzer) have formulated it, is not quite the question to which Plotinus addresses himself. The question which Plotinus asks, in the fifth chapter of his treatise *On matter*, is whether what is « everlasting (ἀΐδιος) » is « generated (γενητός) » or « ungenerated (ἀγένητος) »[9]. And to settle that question, Plotinus distinguishes two senses of "ungenerated": "ungenerated" because without a beginning in time, and "ungenerated" because independent of any prior principle[10]. "Ungenerated" in the *first* sense need not imply "ungenerated" in the *second* sense. It need not, and for the matter of the intelligible world, it does not. Intelligible matter, as also the ideas, is "generated" (γενητός) because it depends upon a principle prior to itself, and "ungenerated" (ἀγένητος) because its generation is not a generation in time[11].

But of course, my perspicacious reader will object, O'Brien is trying to dazzle us with science. He has come round to talking about in-

[9] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 24-28.

[10] Cfr. *ibid.* 5. 25-28. The distinction is only implicit; see the following footnote.

[11] The general principle which I have formulated here (the distinction between the two senses of ἀγένητος) is only implicit in the passage I have quoted from the treatise *On matter*. What Plotinus in fact says here (*enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 25-28) is that intelligible matter as also the ideas are "generated" because they depend upon a prior principle (5. 25: γενητὰ μέν [...] τῷ ἀρχὴν ἔχειν) and "ungenerated" because their dependence upon a prior principle does not imply a beginning in time (5. 26-27: ἀγένητα δέ, ὅτι μὴ χρόνῳ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχειν, ἀλλ' ἀεὶ παρ' ἄλλου). To make quite clear what is going on here, I have started off by distinguishing two senses of "ungenerated": what is "ungenerated" in the sense that, although it depends upon a prior principle, it is not generated in time (cfr. 5. 26: ἀγένητα [...] ὅτι μὴ χρόνῳ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχειν), and what is "ungenerated" in that it does not depend upon a prior principle at all (in my Greek, not Plotinus': ἀγένητα [...] τῷ μὴ ἀρχὴν ἔχειν). Intelligible matter, as also the ideas, is "ungenerated" in the *first* sense, but is not therefore "ungenerated" in the *second* sense.

telligible matter, whereas Schwyzer is objecting to his account of the generation of matter in the sensible world. The sly beast... But, *cher ami*, that sleight of hand is not mine; it is Schwyzer's. "Indestructible", Schwyzer tells us, implies "ungenerated"[12]. And what is the passage Schwyzer quotes to substantiate the use of that second term? The passage Schwyzer quotes to prove (or to illustrate) his point is exactly the passage which I have just quoted where Plotinus distinguishes the two senses of ἀγένητος for intelligible matter[13].

The error is so far-reaching and bizarre that it may take a moment to get it into focus. To start with, Schwyzer has quoted a passage where Plotinus is concerned with intelligible matter, and not with the matter of the sensible world. And secondly, the burden of that passage is to distinguish two different senses of "ungenerated": what is "not generated" in time may still be "generated" in so far as it depends upon a prior principle for its existence[14].

The conclusion, however unpalatable for Schwyzer's friends and admirers, is therefore crushingly and blazingly obvious. *Even if* we accepted the principle that "indestructible" implies "ungenerated", and *even if* we therefore agreed to apply to the matter of the sensible world the term ἀγένητος which Plotinus in fact applies to intelligible matter, the result would be exactly the opposite of the result which Schwyzer requires. The matter of the sensible world (like the matter of the intelligible world) would not be generated in time, but it would be generated in the sense of deriving its origin from a principle prior to itself[15].

Which is what I claimed Plotinus meant in the first place[16].

[12] SCHWYZER, *op. cit.*, p. 276: « Von der hiesigen ὕλη aber sagt er, sie sei ἀνώλεθρος [...], was ἀγένητος einschliesst ». See p. 29 note 5 above.

[13] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 24-28. Cfr. p. 29 note 5 above.

[14] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 24-28. Schwyzer does start by acknowledging that ἀγένητος is applied to intelligible matter, but at once argues to the use of the same adjective for the matter of the sensible world. I have quoted his argument in full above (p. 29 note 5).

[15] Cfr. *enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 24-28. See also the footnote following this.

[16] Cfr. *Plotinus on evil*, pp. 127-8 and p. 136; *Plotinus and the Gnostics*, p. 113 and p. 121 (= note 19). I here stated the theory of a generation of matter

"EVEN IF SOUL HAD GENERATED MATTER..."

So let us take Schwyzer's last argument: that the condition in the treatise *On evils* should be read as an "unreal" (or "counter-factual") condition[17]. The answer is that there is no reason on earth or in high heaven why it should be, unless we are already persuaded that Plotinus did not/could not believe in a generation of matter.

It is true that (as so very often in Plotinus' highly syncopated Greek) there is no main verb to the sentence[18]. But nor has there been in the two sentences immediately preceding[19]. And the reason in all three cases is the same: the verb which has to be supplied is the simple verb "is" or "was". Sentence number one: « Matter therefore ⟨is/was⟩ cause of weakness to the soul and cause of evil »[20]. Sentence

incidentally to two other questions: the problem of evil and Plotinus' criticism of the Gnostics (cfr. p. 11 above). — Please note that the paragraph preceding this is cast in the form of an argument *ad hominem*. Plotinus is not in fact talking in this passage (*enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 24-28) of a generation of the matter of the sensible world. If we do apply what he says here to the generation of both forms of matter (intelligible matter and the matter of the sensible world), it will follow that the matter of the sensible world, like intelligible matter, is both "generated" because it depends upon a prior principle and "ungenerated" because it has no beginning in time (hence my reply to Schwyzer), but it will not follow (here comes my *caveat*) that the relation of matter to time is the same in the intelligible and in the sensible world. Plotinus writes explicitly (5. 26-28) that intelligible matter and the forms, although « derived always from another (ἀεὶ παρ' ἄλλου)», are not therefore « always in a process of becoming (οὐχ ὡς γινόμενα ἀεί) », « as is the case for this world (ὥσπερ ὁ κόσμος) », but « always are (ἀλλὰ ὄντα ἀεί) », « as is the case for the intelligible world » as a whole (ὥσπερ ὁ ἐκεῖ κόσμος). In other words, the comparison established in this passage (by Schwyzer, not by Plotinus) between intelligible matter and the matter of the sensible world is sufficient to act as a refutation of Schwyzer, but does not imply that both forms of matter are in the same sense "timeless".

[17] Schwyzer's argument, p. 275 (see p. 29 note 5 above). The passage he has quoted, *enn.* I 8 [51] 14. 51-54. This is the "last" of Schwyzer's arguments in the order which I have given to them (pp. 28-9 above); Schwyzer in fact puts this argument before the arguments I have already taken account of.

[18] *Enn.* I 8 [51] 14. 51-53.

[19] *Ibid.* 14. 49-50 and 50-51.

[20] *Ibid.* 14. 49-50 (ὕλη τοίνυν καὶ ἀσθενείας ψυχῇ αἰτία καὶ κακίας αἰτία).

number two: « So matter ⟨is/was⟩ itself antecedently evil and primal evil »[21]. Sentence three: « Matter ⟨is/was⟩ the cause by its presence »[22].

What I have quoted as sentence three is the apodosis of a conditional sentence. In the protasis, Plotinus three times employs a simple aorist: « Even if soul generated matter (ἐγέννησε), and if it joined up with matter (ἐκοινώνησεν) and became evil (ἐγένετο)... »[23]. Apodosis: « matter ⟨is/was⟩ the cause by its presence »[24]. There is no mood here other than the indicative, and no modal particle. It would be quite wilful to translate the condition here as an unreal one (« if soul had [...], matter would have been... »).

It is true that the sentence following is in the unreal form, but there we have an explicit verb and the modal particle (οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐγένετο...). « The soul would not have come to be in matter if matter, by its presence, had not provided soul with the opportunity of coming to be in it »[25]. The condition here is an "unreal" (or "counter-factual") one because of course matter, by its presence, does provide soul with the opportunity of coming to be in it, and soul does therefore come to be in matter[26].

But the "unreal" form of this, the following sentence, gives no handle at all — either grammatically or contextually — for reading back the "unreal" form into the sentence preceding. Schwyzer thinks it does only because he is already persuaded that Plotinus did not believe in

[21] *Ibid.* 14. 50-51 (πρότερον ἄρα κακὴ αὐτὴ καὶ πρῶτον κακόν).

[22] *Ibid.* 14. 53 (ἡ ὕλη αἰτία παροῦσα).

[23] *Ibid.* 14. 51-52.

[24] *Ibid.* 14. 53 (quoted above).

[25] *Ibid.* 14. 53-54. I translate here *ad sensum, i.e.* with a change of subject from "soul" to "matter". In the Greek "soul" remains the subject thoughout. Plotinus writes: οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐγένετο (*scil.* ἡ ψυχή) εἰς αὐτὴν (*scil.* τὴν ὕλην) μὴ τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτῆς τὴν γένεσιν λαβοῦσα. I have treated the participle as conferring on the sentence a conditional meaning; for this use of the participle, see R. HORTON-SMITH, *The theory of conditional sentences in Greek and Latin*, London 1894, pp. 119-22 (= § 91).

[26] Plotinus has already emphasised the same point (*ibid.* 14. 42-43). Matter provides the cause of the soul's entrance into matter, οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἦλθε (*scil.* ἡ ψυχή) τῷ μὴ παρόντι. Note the presence of the modal particle.

the generation of matter and is therefore reluctant to think that he could even refer to such a doctrine except in the unreal mode. But that is not scholarship or argument, it is plain prejudice[27].

[27] These are harsh words, I know. But is it not really more honest on such occasions to say what one thinks, even if it is going to strike some people as brazen or even unkind?

Chapter IV

CORRIGAN'S STATEMENT OF HIS THESIS

It would be very tempting at this point to acquaint the reader with Kevin Corrigan's objections to Dr Schwyzer's thesis (every one of which, or so it seems to me, totally misses the point). But I fear I must resist the temptation. It would make my argument too impossibly involuted and circular. Not even the most leisured reader, I fear, would want to tread his way through the hills and valleys of O'Brien's reactions to Corrigan's reactions to Schwyzer's original reactions to O'Brien...[1]

On the other hand (even apart from the obvious temptations) I cannot wholly ignore Corrigan's failure to reply adequately to Schwyzer's

[1] But perhaps I should not be too puritanical. Since the only way to get rid of temptation is to give in to it, I shall allow myself to quote just one example of the way in which Corrigan's attempted answers to Schwyzer quite fail to hit their mark. Schwyzer objects (p. 276) that Plotinus writes of the generation of body by soul, but not of the generation of matter (see ch. II above). Corrigan replies by quoting the soul's production of "absolute indefiniteness" in the opening chapter of the treatise *On the daimon* (*enn.* III 4 [15] 1. 8-12), and adds contentedly (p. 168): « We need no clearer evidence than this to refute Schwyzer's contention ». But the most telling point against Schwyzer lies not in the lines which Corrigan has quoted (1. 8-12), but in the lines immediately following (1. 12-16, not quoted by Corrigan), where Plotinus writes that what is indefinite "becomes body" by its reception of form. It is this explicit distinction between "body" and a state of "absolute indefiniteness" anterior to body which is the point most germane to Schwyzer's objection, and it is by re-reading and thinking about the two penultimate sentences in this chapter (1. 12-16) that Schwyzer is most likely to be helped to find his way from darkness into light.

objections; for the result of this failure is that Corrigan is himself led astray by the false interpretation that Schwyzer had already given of a couple of crucial passages[2]. So of course it often is. Errors once unleashed live on in the strangest places, and many a writer on Plotinus would (I hope) shudder if he knew from what unlikely and disreputable source had originally sprung the opinions which now flow from his pen with such apparent ease[3].

In this case the paradox is more than usually striking; for although Corrigan and Schwyzer are on more than one point companions in error, even so they disagree utterly on the interpretation which each has to offer of the generation of matter in the *Enneads*. Schwyzer thinks that there is no generation of the matter of the sensible world anywhere in the *Enneads*, while Corrigan opens up a whole Pandora's box of different kinds of matter and of different types of generation. Without even counting the generation of intelligible matter, Corrigan has no less than three (and sometimes more) different kinds of matter, and no less than three (and sometimes as many as five or six) different types of generation[4].

Corrigan's conjuring forth such a flowering of different levels of matter and of different types of generation from the sterile soil of Dr Schwyzer's reading of the *Enneads* is a feat of no mean achievement. And it is equally no mean achievement on the reader's part to disentangle from Corrigan's sprawling references and serried sentences and footnotes quite how it is that he thinks he has arrived at so many startling and original conclusions.

[2] The two main passages where Schwyzer seems to have led Corrigan astray are *enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 24-39, where both Corrigan and Schwyzer see references, directly (Corrigan) or indirectly (Schwyzer), to the matter of the sensible world, and *enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 13-15, where both Corrigan and Schwyzer take οὔτε ἐγένετο as an absolute (*i.e.* non-predicative) use of the verb. I examine both points in detail in ch. V below.

[3] Does this seem fanciful? The sceptical optimist may like to read my analysis of a passage in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* where the errors, endlessly repeated, of successive generations of translators and editors have covered the plain meaning of the text like ever-mounting drifts of unmelted snow. See *Comment écrivait Plotin? Étude sur 'Vie de Plotin' 8. 1-4*, in *Porphyre, 'La Vie de Plotin'*, cit., I, pp. 329-67.

[4] I shall illustrate this statement of Corrigan's thesis in the pages which follow.

But first things first. Before even attempting to discover whether Corrigan's interpretation is true or false, we need to know just what that interpretation is. And that is far more easily said than done. I shall leave aside therefore, for the three chapters following this, a critical examination of some of the arguments used by Corrigan to support his thesis. For the moment, in this present chapter, my aim will be the much more modest (but hardly less difficult) one of attempting to discover just what that thesis is.

My aim will be to discover just how many different kinds of matter there are in Corrigan's interpretation of Plotinus, quite how many different types of generation there are, and quite how the different kinds of matter are meant to match up with the different types of generation.

The labour of attempting to provide clear answers to those questions has been considerable. Even so, I doubt that Kevin Corrigan will be as grateful as he should be for my attempts to introduce light into his darkness, order into his disorder. I can only assure him (were he to be tempted to think otherwise) that my no doubt numerous errors in attempting to understand what it is that he has to say are all involuntary.

"Lower" matter and its origins

Corrigan claims to have discovered no less than three different levels of what he calls "lower" matter at different places in the *Enneads*[5].

> — There is first a matter which, because it is said to have been « cast out from the Intelligible (ἐκριφεῖσα) » or to have « walked out of True Being » (Corrigan's colourful translation of ἐκβεβηκὸς τοῦ ἀληθῶς εἶναι), must, he thinks, by implication have started off by belonging to the intelligible world. This is the highest level of "lower" matter[6].

[5] The statement that there are three levels or manifestations of what Corrigan calls "lower" matter is repeated on pp. 167, 169, 170 and 176 of his article.

[6] The two quotations (ἐκριφεῖσα, ἐκβεβηκός...) are from *enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 11 and

— Below this (level number two therefore) there is what Corrigan calls « pre-cosmic » matter, a matter which is « everlastingly unlit », « in, or at the bottom of, the intelligible world »[7].

— And below this again (level number three therefore) there is matter as « the final substrate of sensible objects »[8].

There are also three different "generations" of matter.

— One kind of matter is « generated as an implicit consequence of the first movement or otherness from the One »[9].

— There is secondly a generation of matter by "pure" soul[10].

— And finally there is a generation of matter by "partial" soul[11].

Two sets of three: the reader as naïvely hopeful as myself risks jumping to the conclusion, on a first (and even on a second and a third) reading of Corrigan's article, that there will be one "generation" for each level of matter. Nothing of the sort. Attempt to follow through the labyrinthine ways of Corrigan's article and of his mind, and you will soon discover that any simple understanding of his thesis seems almost to recede at the very moment when you might have thought it lay at last within your grasp.

28. Corrigan's interpretation is given on pp. 170, 176 and 180. For the quotation from cap. 5. 28, Corrigan translates variously as « gone out of True Being » (p. 170), as « walked out of True Being » (p. 176) and (changing to a present tense) as « walking out of True Being » (p. 180).

[7] For this quotation, see p. 172 of Corrigan's article. For "pre-cosmic" matter, see Corrigan's further remarks lower on the same page, as well as pp. 169 note 9, 170 note 10 and 171 note 14. I return to Corrigan's conception of a "pre-cosmic" matter in ch. VI below.

[8] CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 174 sqq. See also my ch. VII below.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 172, 176.

THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF "LOWER" MATTER

Corrigan gives no explicit account of the generation of his highest kind of "lower" matter. Indeed we are told nothing more of this highest level of "lower" matter than that its existence is implied by the two expressions I have already quoted: ἐκριφεῖσα and ἐκβεβηκός[12].

One can only hope, for the coherence of Corrigan's general thesis, that even this, the highest form of "lower" matter, is somehow generated, from something, somewhere; but Corrigan does nothing to satisfy his reader's healthy appetite for further information on this point.

"PURE SOUL" AND "FIRST OTHERNESS"

The hungry reader must pass on to the second level of "lower" matter, what Corrigan calls "pre-cosmic" matter[13].

Here, instead of having no generation of matter, we seem to have one too many. Precosmic matter is stated to be generated by "pure soul" (otherwise described as "soul itself" and as "intelligible soul")[14]. But precosmic matter is also stated, elsewhere, to be an « implicit consequence of the first movement or otherness from the One » (also summarised as "first otherness" and as "first movement")[15]. Are there then two different generations of precosmic matter?

[12] *Enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 11 and 28; CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 170, 176, 180. It should be noted that the former expression (ἐκριφεῖσα) is a *hapax* in the *Enneads* (see SLEEMAN and POLLET, *Lexicon plotinianum*, *s.v.* ἐκρίπτειν, col. 355) and is preceded by the all important οἷον.

[13] CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 169 note 9, 170 note 10, 171 note 14, 172.

[14] Corrigan writes (p. 174) that « the notion that the pure soul generates matter is already implied in an earlier treatise, IV, 3, 9, 12-26, where the coming to be of matter/darkness is a consequence of the perfect illumination of the *world soul* at rest in itself » (Corrigan's italics), and earlier (p. 170 note 10) that « pre-cosmic matter is [...] the "darkness" of IV, 3, 9, 23-25 ». Since the two quotations overlap (*enn.* IV 3 [27] 9. 23-25/26), I conclude that "pure soul" generates "pre-cosmic matter". "Pure soul" (I hope I am right) is the same as « soul itself, the intelligible soul » (CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, p. 176).

[15] Corrigan writes (p. 169) that « II, 4, 5 seems to demand, unless we emend the text, that sensible matter is generated as an implicit consequence of the first

It is perhaps to answer this question (or perhaps to discourage us from asking it) that Corrigan will tell us later that his « three accounts of the generation of matter cannot be understood as three different generations, but only as three different viewpoints »[16]. But that claim serves only to deepen the reader's confusion. A generation of matter by "pure" soul is not at all the same as a generation of matter by "first otherness", unless we are to identify "pure soul" and "first otherness". Could even Corrigan hope to persuade us to subscribe to such a view?

No wonder that such a claim is never made explicit. Far better, Corrigan must have thought, the way things were turning out, to let sleeping dogs lie. Far safer to lull the reader into a happy feeling that all differences are after all only so many different points of view, rather than to spell out for all the world to see that, on the interpretation which is here offered, the soul has to be identified with "otherness" and with "primal movement" sprung from the One[17].

"Partial" soul

The shadows cast by the unhappy union of "pure soul" and "otherness" deepen rapidly when we descend from "pure" soul to "partial" soul[18].

movement or otherness from the One », and in a footnote on the same page (p. 169 note 9) he writes: « In II, 4, 5, 25-28 Plotinus indicates the sense in which an intelligible principle can be said to be generated [...] Although this applies to intelligible matter, I propose that it must also apply to lower, pre-cosmic matter ». I hope that these two references (*enn.* II 4 [12] 5 and 5. 25-28) are meant to coincide. — In the lines quoted, Plotinus writes of "first movement" (or « primal movement, ἡ κίνησις ἡ πρώτη », 5. 30) and of « intelligible otherness (ἡ ἑτερότης ἡ ἐκεῖ) » (5. 28-29). Corrigan paraphrases this (p. 169) as « first movement or otherness » an expression which he elsewhere abbreviates to « first otherness » (p. 176) and to « first movement » (*ibid.*).

[16] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

[17] "Otherness" and "primal movement" are sprung from the One; this is how I interpret *enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 31 (ὁμοῦ ἐξέφυσαν κίνησις καὶ ἑτερότης).

[18] Corrigan on "partial" soul: see pp. 168, 172, 176.

Plotinus (we have seen) uses that expression in the third chapter of *Various investigations*: the "partial" soul generates "what is not"[19]. Corrigan writes of this passage, on only the second page of his article, that « there is no question that the partial soul makes matter »[20]. That awkward and ambiguous form of words seems to be intended as an emphatic denial: in chapter three of *Various investigations*, the partial soul does *not* make matter. The reader concludes that, for Corrigan (as for Schwyzer), "non-being" in that passage is not the same as matter[21].

But only two pages further on in Corrigan's article, the hapless reader is presented with exactly the opposite claim. Corrigan here tells us that, in chapter three of *Various investigations*, "non-being" is the same as "pre-cosmic" matter[22].

What can the poor reader do? Plotinus writes explicitly, in this passage, that partial soul generates non-being[23]. Corrigan tells him, no less explicitly, that this non-being is the same as precosmic matter[24]. What room is there for escape? Despite Corrigan's earlier denial (« there is no question that the partial soul makes matter »), the diligent reader has to conclude that, since non-being here is matter, and since the partial soul generates non-being, therefore the partial soul does generate matter[25].

[19] *Enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 7-12; see pp. 16-18 above.

[20] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 168 note 5. See also the following footnote.

[21] I have discussed separately, in a *Parenthesis* at the end of this chapter, the ambiguity that hangs over the sentence last quoted from Corrigan (p. 168 note 5: « there is no question that... »). See pp. 55-7 below. For Schwyzer's interpretation of this passage, see pp. 28-30 above.

[22] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 170 note 10: « Pre-cosmic matter is [...] the "non-being" of III, 9, 3, 9-14 ».

[23] *Enn.* III, 9 [13] 3. 7-12.

[24] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 170 note 10 (quoted above).

[25] The contradiction follows only if I have hit on the right interpretation of the ambiguous sentence quoted above (Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 168 note 5: « there is no question that... »). If I am wrong on this point, and if Corrigan in fact intends to assert that the "partial" soul does make matter, the question would then arise: why does the "partial" soul in *Various investigations* generate a different kind of matter from that generated by (an identical or similar) soul in the opening chapter of *On the daimon*? (See *enn.* III 9 [13] 3 and *enn.* III 4 [15] 1.) And if the answer to that question is that, in both treatises, the same or a similar soul generates the

Worse still, he has to conclude that the partial soul generates precosmic matter, which now has no less than three different origins: "partial" soul, "pure" soul and "first otherness" (or "first movement", — or both)[26].

All of which, if we are to believe Corrigan's further claim, only four pages later on in his article, are merely so many different "viewpoints" of one and the same generation of matter...[27]

"Partial" soul in the treatise *On the daimon*

The origin (or perhaps only a symptom) of the confusion seems to be that Corrigan does not use the expression "partial" soul in the same way — or at least not in the same contexts — in which Plotinus uses that expression in the *Enneads*.

Plotinus introduces a "partial" soul when he writes of a generation of "non-being" in the third chapter of *Various investigations*[28]. He does not use that expression in the opening chapter of his treatise *On the daimon*, where he writes instead of « the soul which comes to be in plants »[29]. On the interpretation which I have offered of Plotinus' theory, these two manifestations of soul are essentially the same, so that in both treatises it is "partial" soul which generates matter[30].

Corrigan's use of the term is quite different. He writes freely of a "partial" soul when he is commenting on the opening chapter of *On the daimon*, but he does not think that what is generated by the (im

same kind of matter, then wherein does Corrigan's interpretation of these two treatises differ from my own — as Corrigan so forcefully says it does on p. 168 note 5 of his article?

[26] "Pure" soul generates precosmic matter, see p. 47 note 14 above. "First otherness" generates precosmic matter, see p. 47 note 15 above. See the same footnote for Corrigan's various formulations ("first otherness", "first movement", etc.).

[27] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 176 (quoted above).

[28] *Enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 7 (ἡ μερική, *scil.* ψυχή).

[29] *Enn.* III 4 [15] 1. 1-2 (καὶ αἴσθησιν τὴν ἐν ὑποστάσει καὶ φύσιν καὶ μέχρι φυτῶν). See also cap. 1. 4-5 (ὅταν δὲ ἐν φυτοῖς γένηται, *scil.* ἡ ψυχή).

[30] See ch. I above, where I further identify these two expressions with the "image" of soul described in *enn.* V 2 [11] 1. 18-21; cfr. 2. 29-30.

plicitly) partial soul in this treatise is the same as what is generated by the (explicitly) "partial" soul in *Various investigations*[31]. In *Various investigations*, the non-being generated by an (explicitly) "partial" soul is specifically said by Corrigan to be precosmic matter (level number two in his three levels of "lower" matter)[32]. While the object generated by an (implicitly) "partial" soul in the opening chapter of *On the daimon* is pretty clearly intended (by Corrigan) to be « the final substrate of sensible objects » (*i.e.* the third of his three levels of "lower" matter)[33].

But how can these two claims be reconciled? If the object generated by soul in *Various investigations* is not the same as the object generated by soul in *On the daimon*, then by what right do we transfer the description of "partial" soul from *Various investigations* to *On the daimon*?

On the interpretation that I have offered of these two treatises, the object engendered by soul is the same (matter), and the soul which generates this object is also essentially the same ("partial" soul in *Various investigations*, the soul which « comes to be in plants » in *On the daimon*). But once the object generated is no longer the same, then can we be sure that the soul described in *On the daimon* (the soul which « comes to be in plants ») is the same as the "partial" soul described in *Various investigations*[34]?

Corrigan offers his readers no assurance on that point, and indeed there are unhappy moments, reading and re-reading his article, when I wonder whether he has even seen the problem. Certainly, no justification is ever offered of the very curious point that Corrigan transfers to the treatise *On the daimon* the specification given of soul in *Various investigations*, and yet denies the very point which alone can justify that transference, namely that the object generated in either treatise should be the same ("non-being" in *Various investigations*, "absolute otherness" in *On the daimon*)[35].

[31] Corrigan writes frequently of "partial" soul; see pp. 168, 172, 176.

[32] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 170 note 10 (cfr. p. 49 note 22 above).

[33] This is how I interpret pp. 168 and 170 of Corrigan's article.

[34] The two texts: *enn.* III 9 [13] 3 (*Various investigations*); *enn.* III 4 [15] 1 (*On the daimon*).

[35] For these two texts, see the preceding footnote. For Corrigan's use of the expression "partial soul" when commenting on *enn.* III 4 [15] 1 (*On the daimon*), see p. 168 of his article. Cfr. pp. 172 and 176.

But is Corrigan even aware that he has anything to justify? Does he even realise that in writing of a "partial" soul in *On the daimon* he has departed from the *ipsissima verba* of the text of the *Enneads*?

Corrigan's glib use of "partial" soul leads me in my gloomier moments to think the answer to both questions is "no".

The tentacles of "partial" soul

Is it too soon to attempt to summarise Corrigan's account of "partial" soul, as we have uncovered it so far?

In his account of *Various investigations*, Corrigan tells us that the non-being (generated, according to Plotinus, by partial soul) is precosmic matter, and he also tells us that, in that same passage, « there is no question that the partial soul makes matter »[36].

And yet neither of those two (self-contradictory?) claims is true of *On the daimon*, for here Corrigan's interpretation appears to be that the "absolute otherness" generated (according to Corrigan) by "partial" soul is the third and lowest kind of "lower" matter, namely « the final substrate of sensible objects »[37].

We end up therefore with three, overlapping and surely at least in part incompatible, claims:

> — "partial" soul in the treatise *On the daimon* generates the third and lowest kind of "lower" matter (« the final substrate of sensible objects »);
>
> — "partial" soul in the third chapter of *Various investigations* generates the second level of "lower" matter, namely precosmic matter;

[36] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 170 note 10 and p. 168 note 5. Plot. *enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 7-14.

[37] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, pp. 168 and 170 (cfr. p. 51 note 33 above). Plot. *enn.* III 4 [15] 1 (see esp. cap. 1. 11-12).

> — "partial" soul in the third chapter of *Various investigations* does not generate matter at all.

Can these really be taken as merely three different "viewpoints" of a single truth[38]?

Four levels of "lower" matter

The contradiction in Corrigan's account of the rôle of "partial" soul casts a blight over the whole of his subsequent analysis.

In his account of "unlit" matter from chapter five of the treatise *On matter*, Corrigan tells us that « we appear [...] to have found another generation of lower matter, higher than that of the partial soul »[39]. What matter is this?

If "partial" soul generates the third and lowest kind of "lower" matter, then « a generation of lower matter, higher than that of the partial soul » should be precosmic matter, which is the same (for Corrigan) as "unlit" matter[40]. So far so good.

But Corrigan has also told us that the non-being generated (according to Plotinus) by partial soul *is* precosmic matter[41]. A « generation of lower matter, higher than that of the partial soul » should therefore, on this interpretation, be a generation of matter superior to precosmic matter.

But, if we keep to Corrigan's three levels of "lower" matter, the only manifestation of "lower" matter superior to precosmic matter is the matter which, since it has « walked out of True Being », must earlier (or so Corrigan would have us believe) have been part of "True Being" (without being the same as intelligible matter). And that matter (Corrigan's highest level of "lower" matter) is not the same as "unlit" matter (which corresponds to Corrigan's second level of "lower" matter)[42].

[38] Cfr. Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 176 (quoted p. 48 above).

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 172. Plot. *enn.* II 4 [12] cap. 5, esp. lines 35-37.

[40] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 172 (cfr. p. 46 note 7 above).

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 170 note 10 (cfr. p. 49 note 22 and p. 51 note 31 above).

[42] See my initial outline of Corrigan's interpretation (pp. 45-6 above).

To make room for a generation of matter which is both « higher than that of the partial soul » and yet lower than Corrigan's first level of "lower" matter, we shall have to intercalate an additional level of "lower" matter, so as to end up with not three, but four levels of "lower" matter:

— matter which belongs to the intelligible world before "walking out" from it;

— matter which is lower than this but superior to precosmic matter;

— precosmic matter;

— matter as "the final substrate of sensible objects" [43].

Six "generations" of "lower" matter

But — hold tight — there is more to come. On this reading of Corrigan's thesis, we shall have not three, nor even four, but as many as six "generations" of "lower" matter.

For if we exclude the possibility that any one of the four levels of "lower" matter is not generated, then we must presumably have a specific form of generation for each one of the four.

And yet for precosmic matter we have already found no less than three separate "generations": "partial" soul, "pure" soul and "first otherness" [44].

Six "generations" in all...

Charitable optimism

Comprendra qui pourra. Is it too unkind of me to conclude that not even the most conscientious and potentially well-meaning reader (myself) can hope to achieve a coherent grasp of Corrigan's thesis taken as a whole?

[43] For the three levels of "lower" matter, see pp. 45-6 above.

[44] See pp. 47-8 above ("pure" soul and "first otherness") and pp. 48-50 above ("partial" soul).

And if the very statement of Corrigan's thesis is riddled with inconsistencies, can there be any point in our examining the evidence Corrigan has quoted to support it? Readers may well be tempted to ask, of their time and of mine, *ut quid perditio haec?*

But let us try to be charitable, or at least optimistic. Would Corrigan have been so distracted as to present his thesis in such a slipshod and self-contradictory fashion, if he had not been fired by the conviction of some new and penetrating insight into the meaning of individual texts?

Even if Corrigan's thesis, as a self-consistent whole, disintegrates almost before we have had time to look at it, let us at least hope that individual parts of the evidence quoted to support it can be salvaged from the wreckage and put to some honest purpose.

A parenthesis

Before turning to (what one may hope will be) salvage operations in the next chapter, I need to add this brief parenthesis, in order to protect Corrigan's interests and my own.

I have quoted above the sentence where Corrigan writes: « there is no question that the partial soul makes matter » [45]. There may be some subtleties of North American English which escape me, but in English English that sentence, on which I have had to base a large part of my attempted re-statement of Corrigan's thesis, is ambiguous, and may have one or other of two opposite meanings: *either* « there is no question *but that* the partial soul makes matter » (conclusion: the partial soul does make matter), *or* « it is *out of the question that* the partial soul makes matter » (conclusion: the partial soul does not make matter).

It is this *second* meaning which seems to me required by the context of the sentence in Corrigan's footnote, but even here I may be wrong, for the footnote is itself hideously inaccurate and even inconsistent.

[45] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 168 note 5. Cfr. p. 49 above.

(For ease of reference, I divide the relevant part of Corrigan's footnote into four stages[46].)

I. Corrigan first states that the third chapter of *Various investigations* (*enn.* III 9 [13] 3) « is indeed ambiguous, as Schwyzer claims ». But in the article which Corrigan has quoted, Schwyzer does not say that this passage is ambiguous; he writes quite straightforwardly that "non-being", in this chapter, refers to body, and not to matter[47].

II. Corrigan is not only inaccurate in his account of Schwyzer's position, he is also inconsistent. For in the next sentence but one of Corrigan's footnote, Schwyzer is no longer credited with the belief that the passage is ambiguous; he is plainly saddled with the view that "non-being", in that passage, is "body", with the result that Corrigan now arrogates to himself alone the theory that the passage is ambiguous. "Non-being", Corrigan tells us, is here neither matter (O'Brien's view), nor body (this is now given as Schwyzer's view), but refers « rather to matter as a field of indefiniteness pertaining to soul in which body will be shaped at a logically later stage ».

III. There follows the sentence quoted at the beginning of this parenthesis. Whether we emend τούτου τὸ εἴδωλον (cap. 3. 12) to τοῦτο τὸ εἴδωλον (Kirchhoff), or whether we we take τούτου to refer to "soul" (Henry and Schwyzer), in either case, Corrigan tells us, « there is no question that the partial soul makes matter ». This sentence I take to be Corrigan's reaffirmation of his denial (II. above) that "non-being" is matter[48].

[46] In what follows, all quotations from Corrigan are taken from his p. 168 note 5.

[47] See p. 12 note 2 above (Schwyzer's article) and p. 28 note 4 above (the relevant quotation). Rather curiously, in a different article, not quoted by Corrigan, Schwyzer is much less sure of his ground and does seem to leave open the possibility that he may be wrong in denying the soul's generation of matter. See *Plotinisches und Unplotinisches in den 'Αφορμαί des Porphyrios*, in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*, cit., pp. 221-52, esp. p. 249 (for this colloquium, see p. 22 note 25 above). (Schwyzer is here commenting upon PORPH. *senten.* 26, and refers to Plotinus more or less incidentally.)

[48] The reader may like to know that my own view is that τούτου (cap. 3. 12) refers not so much to soul itself, as to the activity of soul described in the sentence preceding (3. 10-12). It is because the soul has « become indefinite (ἀοριστοτέρα γινομένη) » (3. 11-12) that « the image of this (τούτου τὸ εἴδωλον) » (3. 12) is « what is indefinite (τὸ ἀόριστον) » (3. 12). On this reading of the passage, the εἴδωλον at cap. 3.12 is the same as the εἴδωλον mentioned in the preceding line (3. 11), and this in turn is the same as « what is not (τὸ μὴ ὄν) » (3. 9 and 11). Note however that difficulties (and even disagreements) over the precise interpretation of τούτου τὸ εἴδωλον (3.12) should in no way weaken recognition of Plotinus' forthright statement that « the soul makes what is not » (3. 10-11: τὸ μετ' αὐτὴν ποιεῖ εἴδωλον αὐτῆς, τὸ μὴ ὄν).

IV. Finally, Corrigan holds out the possibility of a new interpretation of the phrase just quoted (cap. 3. 12: τούτου τὸ εἴδωλον), whereby τούτου refers to "non-being". On this interpretation, or so it would seem, "non-being" is body and "the image of non-being" is matter. Corrigan writes: « It cannot be demonstrated (without appeal to a larger context) that Plotinus is not speaking of two images of non-being here and that τούτου refers to the first and higher image, which will have to be then understood as non-being pertaining to body ». (The double negative is again ambiguous in its implications; I take it to be hortatory and promissive, rather than minatory.)

Is this Corrigan's own view? If so, it would seem to be inconsistent with II. above. In the sentence quoted under II. above, "non-being" refers to « matter as a field of indefiniteness pertaining to soul in which body will be shaped at a logically later stage ». On the present interpretation (IV. above), "non-being" (cap. 3. 9 and 11) refers unambiguously to "body" (as Schwyzer also believes), while "matter" appears, again unambiguously, as "the image of non-being", *i.e.* as the image of body[49].

Corrigan seems to promise a defence and an explanation of his interpretation in the final sentence of his footnote, where he writes: « A new approach must be found to settle the question ». But this "new approach" does not seem to materialise anywhere in his present article, unless it is to be found in the claim, two pages later (p. 170 note 10), that "non-being" in this passage is "pre-cosmic matter", a claim which, far from clarifying Corrigan's position, merely leads to implicit contradiction with III. above (construed as a denial that partial soul generates matter)[50].

Need I draw the weary moral? If you want to be understood, write clearly.

[49] For Schwyzer's interpretation, see ch. II above.

[50] For this contradiction, see pp. 48-50 above.

Chapter V

CORRIGAN ON "UNLIT" MATTER

I start my criticism of Corrigan's theory from his claim that "lower" matter, or what Corrigan also calls "sensible" matter, exists not only in the sensible world, but also in the intelligible world[1].

Please note that the "lower" matter, or "sensible" matter, which Corrigan claims to discern within the intelligible world is not the same as intelligible matter. It is a "lower" form of matter, but one which remains forever within the intelligible world, so that (to put things the other way round) there are within the intelligible realm two distinct types of matter: intelligible matter and "lower", "sensible" matter[2].

The alleged presence of "lower" matter in the intelligible world is one of the most striking features of Corrigan's reconstruction. It is also one of the most vulnerable. For, stripped of its verbiage, the presence of "lower" matter in the intelligible world seems to be based on little more than a misreading of the same two passages which had already led

[1] Corrigan writes of "lower" matter as "sensible" matter on pp. 167, 172 and 177 of his article (reference, p. 12 note 2 above). He also writes (pp. 169, 170) of « what must ultimately be sensible matter ». The expression "sensible matter" (αἰσθητὴ ὕλη?) does not occur in the *Enneads* and would be, for Plotinus, almost a contradiction in terms. The matter of the sensible world cannot be in any way perceived by the senses and cannot therefore properly be described as "sensible".

[2] More exactly, there are no less than *three* kinds of matter in Corrigan's intelligible world, for his first *two* levels of "lower" matter are restricted to the intelligible world. See my attempted outline of Corrigan's interpretation at the beginning of the chapter preceding this.

Dr Schwyzer astray: chapter five of Plotinus' treatise *On matter*, and the final chapter of his treatise *On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"*[3].

A "TIMELESS" GENERATION OF "LOWER" MATTER

I take first the final chapter of Plotinus' treatise *On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"*[4]. In his reading of this latter passage, Corrigan takes over, seemingly quite unconsciously, Schwyzer's interpretation of the expression we have already had occasion to dwell upon: οὔτε ἐγένετο[5]. Corrigan, like Schwyzer, thinks that this means « matter is ungenerated »[6]. Unlike Schwyzer, Corrigan recognises that this is not true for the matter whose "generation" is in fact described elsewhere in the *Enneads*. Does it not therefore follow, as inevitably as night follows day, that there are two manifestations of "lower" matter in the *Enneads*, one which is not generated, and one which is?

That, however, is not the conclusion which Corrigan in fact arrives at. For the question would then obviously arise: why should one matter be generated, and another not? A "lower" matter which is generated and one which is not would be uneasy bed-fellows in any interpretation of Plotinus, and it is, I suspect, in order to avoid this anomaly that Corrigan shifts his interpretation of οὔτε ἐγένετο. That expression, Corrigan tells us in the continuation of his analysis, should be taken, not as a denial of generation simply, but as « a denial of temporal generation »[7].

[3] Chapter five of the treatise *On matter* (*enn.* II 4 [12] 5); for Schwyzer's interpretation, see ch. III above. The final chapter of the treatise *On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"* (*enn.* II 5 [25] 5); for Schwyzer's interpretation, see ch. II above.

[4] *Enn.* II 5 [25] 5.

[5] *Ibid.* 5. 13-15. See pp. 30-4 above.

[6] CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, p. 169: « In II, 5, 5 Plotinus appears to deny the generation of matter altogether. Matter is said to be ungenerated (15, οὔτε ἐγένετο) ». Cfr. SCHWYZER, *op. cit.*, p. 276 (quoted p. 29 note 5 above).

[7] CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, p. 169: « It is natural to suppose, in the context of II, 5, 5, and on evidence from elsewhere in the *Enneads*, that οὔτε ἐγένετο is a denial of temporal generation. Matter is timelessly generated ».

The consequences of this new twist to Schwyzer's original misinterpretation of οὔτε ἐγένετο are not made explicit (at least not to my eye) in the course of Corrigan's rambling parentheses and periphrases. But the results implicitly claimed for this new version of an old error would seem to be as follows.

— The denial of a temporal generation implies the affirmation of a timeless generation.

— This timeless generation is not the same as the temporal generation of matter by soul as described, for example, in the treatise *On the daimon*.

— There are therefore two generations of matter: a temporal generation of matter by the soul (*On the daimon*), and a timeless generation of matter (*On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"*).

Perhaps it is just as well that this conclusion is not spelt out clearly for the author and all the world to see just how tenuous such a distinction would be in the context of the *Enneads* taken as a whole. There is, for Plotinus, no "beginning" in time of the sensible world, which always has been and always will be[8]. The generation of matter by soul therefore in no way implies a first beginning. In what sense therefore is the soul's generation of matter a "temporal" act?

But there is no need to pursue the point. For the expression οὔτε ἐγένετο does not refer to a generation of matter, timeless or otherwise. Once that expression has been read in its context (and not simply taken on trust from the truncated form of quotation which is all that appears in Dr Schwyzer's article) then the meaning is at once seen to be, not that the matter of the sensible world « never came into being », but that the matter of the sensible world « neither was nor came to be anything in actuality ». Ἐγένετο is not here an absolute use of the verb ("came into existence"/"came to be"), but a copulative use ("came to be something", ἐγένετο, *scil.* ἐνεργείᾳ τι)[9].

[8] The "sensible" world has no beginning in time: see, for example, the first book of *On providence* (*enn.* III 2 [47] 1. 15 sqq.) and the opening pages of the treatise *On the universe* (*enn.* II 1 [40]).

[9] As we had already seen (ch. II above). I know how wearisome it is to come

Matter "everlastingly unlit"

Corrigan's curious conception of a "lower" matter enclosed within the intelligible world is reinforced by a second quotation, and by a second error.

In the final chapter of his account of intelligible matter in his treatise *On matter*, Plotinus writes that the matter which has issued from the One (through the intermediary of "otherness" and of "primal movement") is "without light" and "without definition" until it is defined by turning towards the source from which it has come[10]. He then goes on to insist that all the light which comes to matter comes to it from its source. Matter has no light of its own; it is not in any way or at any time an independent source of light[11].

To make this point, Plotinus delivers himself of the following sentence:

> εἰ γὰρ παρ' ἐκείνου τὸ φῶς, τὸ δεχόμενον τὸ φῶς, πρὶν δέξασθαι, φῶς οὐκ ἔχει ἀεί, ἀλλὰ ἄλλο ὂν ἔχει, εἴπερ τὸ φῶς παρ' ἄλλου[12].

This I translate as follows (adding angular brackets to indicate words which are not in the Greek but which can properly be supplied from the context):

> « For if the light ⟨comes⟩ from that ⟨source⟩, what receives the light (*scil.* matter), before ⟨it⟩ receives ⟨it⟩, does not possess light all the time ⟨before it receives it⟩, but possesses ⟨it, when it does possess it,⟩ as being something other ⟨than itself⟩, since the light ⟨comes to it⟩ from something other ⟨than itself⟩ ».

back to the same point twice. But how wearisome, and more than wearisome, it is, if one cares at all about the study of Plotinus and of Neoplatonism, to find the same, ultimately trivial, errors paraded again and again in the so-called scholarly literature on the subject, when so much real work still cries out to be done for a serious and sustained understanding of the philosophy of the *Enneads*. I can only hope that by repeated insistance on this one point I may perhaps be able to keep Schwyzer's and Corrigan's (manifestly false) interpretation of οὔτε ἐγένετο from becoming entrenched in this wearisome saga of common errors. — The lack of temporal beginning (see the preceding footnote) does not of course preclude the use of "temporal" or narrative language when describing the activity of soul: see, for example, Plotinus' preface to his account of "the soul of the all" at *enn.* IV 3 [27] 9. 12-20.

[10] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 28-35.

[11] *Ibid.* 5. 35-37.

[12] *Ibid.* 5. 35-37.

The adverb ἀεί, in the apodosis, I take to be restricted in range by the temporal clause which precedes it. Matter is without light « always ⟨up to the time of receiving it⟩, (φῶς οὐκ ἔχει ἀεί, *scil.* πρὶν δέξασθαι) ». This implied restriction on the sense of the adverb is admittedly awkward, but the resultant sentence is not meaningless, nor any worse, grammatically, than a lot else of the Greek that tumbled from Plotinus' fertile brain and scurrying pen[13].

Corrigan however takes the sentence quite otherwise, to mean that matter « has everlastingly no light », and concludes that « what is everlastingly unlit is a pre-cosmic matter at this stage in, or at the bottom of, the intelligible world »[14].

Corrigan's basic mistake here is the same as his mistake in treating of matter which is "not generated". In either case, Corrigan isolates an expression from its context, and so draws forth from it a meaning quite alien to the stream of argument in which that phrase was originally embedded. This is how οὔτε ἐγένετο comes to mean that « matter is ungenerated »; and this is how φῶς οὐκ ἔχει ἀεί comes to mean that matter « everlastingly has no light »[15]. The one mistake is ultimately as crass as the other. In the treatise *On matter*, the subject of the sentence is « what receives the light ». It is hardly possible therefore to say of « what receives light » that « everlastingly it has no light », without verging on the brink of self-contradiction.

And that is just where Corrigan thinks that Plotinus has ended up; in this passage, « Plotinus is on the point of incoherence »[16]. And so

[13] The passage of the *Life* (8. 1-4) where Porphyry describes how Plotinus wrote (what were to be) the *Enneads* has been long misunderstood. For my analysis of the passage, see the article quoted p. 44 note 3 above. Pedants who read the final sentence of my paragraph will, I hope, excuse the *lapsus calami*.

[14] The two quotations are from Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 170 and p. 172.

[15] The two passages are *enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 13-15 and II 4 [12] 5. 35-37.

[16] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

indeed he is if we attempt to prise some lapidary phrase out of the context which alone can give it meaning. Put back the words in their context, and the sentence is, not crystal clear, I admit (Plotinus rarely is), but no less clear than about one in ten of all sentences in the *Enneads*. What receives light, before it receives light, is "forever without light", *scil.* before it receives it. Matter has no light of its own. All light comes to it (ultimately) from the One.

The structure of the treatise *On matter*

Corrigan, I know, will complain that I have done him less than justice in interpreting the sentence about "unlit" matter solely in terms of "lower" matter. Corrigan claims that in this chapter « Plotinus is not discussing a disembodied intelligible universe, but rather the totality of *intelligibilia* and *sensibilia* considered together », and he therefore claims that the sentence about "unlit" matter has really two subjects at the same time: intelligible matter and "lower" matter[17].

But not only is that claim dubious in itself; such an interpretation runs clean counter to the very carefully expressed division of labour within the treatise *On matter*.

Thus in the opening chapter of his treatise *On matter*, Plotinus deliberately distinguishes between a matter which underlies bodies and "another" matter, which is "prior", and which underlies "the intelligible", these latter being « intelligible forms and incorporeal realities »[18]. This second matter (intelligible matter) is specifically taken as subject of the treatise from chapter two onwards, and continues as subject of Plotinus' discussion until the end of chapter five, where Plotinus writes specifically and very deliberately that he has now said enough and more than enough (πλείω τῶν προσηκόντων παραγυμνωθέντα ταύτῃ) about the matter which is found "among the intelligibles", an exact echo of the expression he had used when talking of intelligible matter in his

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

[18] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 1. 14-18.

opening chapter[19]. At the beginning of chapter six, Plotinus then turns to "the substratum of bodies" and so to the matter of the sensible world, which occupies him to the end of the treatise[20].

No division of subject matter could be clearer. Chapters two to five of the treatise *On matter* are devoted to an analysis of intelligible matter. It is only from chapter six onwards that Plotinus takes up the study of the matter which underlies the sensible world.

In the final sentences of chapter five, therefore, Plotinus is still talking peculiarly and specifically of the matter of the intelligible world[21]. To claim otherwise is the most specious kind of special pleading. Corrigan has been drawn into it only by an unhappy conjunction of two quite extraneous elements: Schwyzer's earlier misuse of the same passage, and Corrigan's own rickety interpretation of the temporal adverb in the account of "unlit" matter[22].

It is true that, as Plotinus has told us earlier in the same chapter, intelligible matter joins with form to constitute an « illuminated reality (πεφωτισμένη οὐσία) »[23]. It is true therefore that, if matter were "everlastingly unlit", it would not be intelligible matter. But that conclusion does not follow from what Plotinus in fact says, nor is it what he means. Matter is "forever unlit" only until it receives light. Once we have understood that sentence aright, then there is no reason at all to suppose that at this moment Plotinus is talking of anything other than intelligible matter[24].

[19] *Ibid.* 2. 1 (περὶ ταύτης) looks back to cap. 1. 17 (ἑτέραν μέντοι). Cap. 5. 37-39 (ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς) looks back to the same expression in cap. 1. 17.

[20] *Ibid.* 6. 1 ("the substratum of bodies") looks back to cap. 1. 15-17.

[21] *Ibid.* 5. 24-39.

[22] For Schwyzer's earlier misuse of the same passage, see ch. III above.

[23] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 23.

[24] It is perfectly true that in the course of his analysis of intelligible matter Plotinus has occasion to refer to the matter of the sensible world, — it could hardly be otherwise. Thus in chapter five Plotinus contrasts the two kinds of matter in their relation to form (5. 12-23). But, in the sentences which Corrigan refers to (5. 24-39), it is abundantly clear that Plotinus has returned to his primary preoccupation, and to the principal subject of his investigation throughout this and the preceding three chapters: the matter of the intelligible world.

Chapter VI

CORRIGAN ON "PRECOSMIC" MATTER

In Corrigan's reconstruction of Plotinus, "unlit" matter is also described as "pre-cosmic" matter[1]. "Unlit" matter, as a description of "lower" matter, proves to be a mere chimaera. What of "precosmic" matter?

Here, as in Corrigan's statement of his thesis more generally, the initial difficulty is to know just what Corrigan means by the words he uses. In the context of the *Enneads*, what meaning can attach to "precosmic" matter?

Corrigan, usually so prolix with the synonyms and periphrases that he brings out for "matter" in general, has very little to say on what exactly he means by "precosmic" matter. He does tell us, in his own inimitable manner, that « the matter of the physical world is also the matter which will be of the physical world »[2]. And to make quite sure that all is well with his reader he kindly adds, in brackets: « i.e. matter is both cosmic and pre-cosmic »[3]. — But what precisely is the meaning, in this context, of that distinction?

The distinction cannot quite be (as it might be in some Christian or even in a presocratic cosmogony) the difference between matter before and after the "beginning" of the cosmos, for Plotinus does not believe that the sensible world had a beginning in time[4]. The difference

[1] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 172 (cfr. pp. 45-6 above).
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 171 note 14.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] See p. 61 note 8 above.

between "cosmic" and "precosmic" matter, in the *Enneads*, will have to be, not a difference in time, but a difference between (logically) successive activities of soul, or between (logically) successive states of matter. And we might therefore suppose the difference to lie between a matter which is as yet unformed (precosmic matter) and a matter which has in some way received form through the agency of soul (cosmic matter).

But the distinction which Corrigan apparently has in mind is exactly the opposite of this. For the difference between cosmic and precosmic matter does prove to be a difference between matter which is unformed and a matter which (according to Corrigan) "participates" in form, but with the surprising, and at first sight even disconcerting rider, that it is precosmic matter which participates in form, and cosmic matter which is unformed.

That at least I take to be the implication when Corrigan tells us: « Obviously if pre-cosmic matter does *not* participate (in some puzzling manner albeit) in the Intelligible, there can be no descent of soul »[5].

Matter and the "descent" of soul

Unfortunately for Mr Corrigan, Plotinus himself holds a different view. It is precisely because matter is of itself unformed that the soul must intervene, in order to cover the darkness of matter with form.

The reason for this is given in a passage we have already had occasion to look at, from the first book of *Puzzles about the soul*, where light "becomes" darkness[6].

> « When the soul sees this (*scil.* the darkness), since it existed, she invested it with form. For it was not right for there to be anything neighbouring upon soul which was deprived of rational principle »[7].

This explains one of Plotinus' most deeply felt and bitterest reproaches against the Gnostics, for the Gnostics believed that soul

[5] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

[6] *Enn.* iv 3 [27] 9. 20-29. I earlier quoted 9. 23-26; see ch. i above.

[7] *Ibid.* 9. 26-27 (ὅπερ [*scil.* τὸ σκότος] ἰδοῦσα ἡ ψυχή, ἐπείπερ ὑπέστη, ἐμόρφωσεν αὐτό. οὐ γὰρ ἦν θεμιτὸν γειτονοῦν τι αὐτῇ λόγου ἄμοιρον εἶναι).

might one day abandon matter, and that matter — darkness, utter evil — would then be left "alone" and « stripped of form »[8]. It is to avoid any possibility that matter might be left without form that the soul, in *Various investigations*, returns to the matter she has made and « covers the image with form »[9].

The truth, for Plotinus, is therefore just the opposite of what Corrigan claims it to be. Soul intervenes in order that matter should not be left unformed. If matter were somehow already covered with form, without the intervention of soul, then there would be no need, or less need, for soul to "descend".

It is true that we could perhaps establish a distinction between the soul's intervention in covering matter with form and the soul's "descent". Thus, in the passage quoted from *Various investigations*, it is only when the soul has « covered the image with form » that « she moves into it rejoicing »[10]. Similarly, in the first book of *Puzzles about the soul*, the soul « invested the darkness with form » because, in order to « go forth », she needed to provide for herself « place, and therefore also body »[11]. If we choose to identify the soul's "rejoicing" and her "going forth" with the "descent of soul", then it will be true that matter has been covered with form prior to the soul's "descent".

But Corrigan shows no sign of being aware of this distinction, and apparently wishes to claim that matter is covered by form prior to any activity on the part of soul. (« Obviously if pre-cosmic matter does *not* participate [...] in the Intelligible, there can be no descent of soul »[12]). This contradicts what Plotinus says in the passages I have quoted, and also collapses the distinction between intelligible matter and the matter of the sensible world, as we shall now see[13].

[8] « Alone (μόνη) », *enn.* ii 9 [33] 3. 18; on this passage, see *Plotinus and the Gnostics*, pp. 115-17. « Stripped of form » (cfr. ἀποσυλήσας τῆς ὕλης τὸ εἶδος), cap. 5. 33-36. On the relevance of this criticism to Plotinus' theory of evil, see *Plotinus and the Gnostics*, pp. 117-19.

[9] *Enn.* iii 9 [13] 3. 15-16. For the Greek, see the footnote following.

[10] *Enn.* iii 9 [13] 3. 15-16 (πάλιν δὲ ἰδοῦσα οἷον δευτέρᾳ προσβολῇ τὸ εἴδωλον ἐμόρφωσε καὶ ἡσθεῖσα ἔρχεται εἰς αὐτό).

[11] *Enn.* iv 3 [27] 9. 20-29 (note especially 9. 20-21: σώματος μὴν μὴ ὄντος οὐδ' ἂν προέλθοι ψυχή).

[12] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 177. See also the footnote following.

[13] Connoisseurs of dogmatism disguised as argument will especially relish the

The soul's "second initiative"

The need for the soul's intervention in order to cover the image she has made with form constitutes one of the crucial differences between the matter of the sensible world and intelligible matter.

Intelligible matter, Plotinus tells us in the fifth chapter of his treatise *On matter*, « is defined when it turns towards its source (ὁρίζεται [...] ὅταν [...] ἐπιστραφῇ) »[14]. Not so the matter of the sensible world, which is an « offspring without life » and which cannot therefore (so we may legitimately conclude) "turn towards its source"[15]. In order to be covered with form, the matter of the sensible world requires a "second initiative" on the part of the principle which has made it[16]. The matter of the sensible world cannot, so to speak, be left alone to seek out for itself a covering of form; soul has generated matter, and it is soul which must cover with form the image she has made.

Corrigan quite fails to grasp this feature of Plotinus' theory. « Plotinus », he tells us, « explicitly states that the only difference between intelligible and sensible matter is "by just as much as the form superimposed on both is different" »[17]. But Plotinus says nothing of the kind. In

apotropaic use of the adverb in the sentence quoted above from Corrigan's article (Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 177; see the footnote preceding this). "Obviously", at the beginning of this sentence, is the merest bluff. What seems "obvious" to one reader of the *Enneads* is far from "obvious" to another, and here, as so often elsewhere, the use of "obviously" merely betrays the influence of the (pseudo-)Parmenidean principle: it is so, because I think and say it is so.

[14] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 33-34. The subject of the verb, in these two lines, is "movement" and "otherness" (κίνησις, ἑτερότης, both words taken over from the sentence preceding, 5. 31-33). But in the sentence immediately following (5. 34-35), Plotinus writes of « matter (ὕλη) » and of « what is other (τὸ ἕτερον) ». It seems to me reasonably clear that the account which Plotinus gives here of the passage from "lack of definition" to "definition" (e.g. 5. 33-34: ὁρίζεται [...] πρὶν δὲ ἀόριστον) applies to all three entities: "otherness", "primal movement" (cfr. 5. 30) and (intelligible) matter.

[15] An « offspring without life » (cfr. τὸ γεννώμενον ἄζων) is the description given of the object generated by soul in the opening chapter of the treatise *On the daimon* (*enn.* III 4 [15] 1.7).

[16] *Enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 15-16 (a « second initiative, οἷον δευτέρᾳ προσβολῇ »).

[17] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

the passage Corrigan has quoted, Plotinus does say that the form which soul brings to the matter of the sensible world is but an "image" of the form which joins with intelligible matter[18]. But Plotinus nowhere says that this difference in form is the *only* difference between matter in the intelligible and matter in the sensible world[19].

Corrigan thinks he does, only because he has already been misled by Schwyzer into believing that, throughout this chapter of his treatise *On matter*, Plotinus is writing equally of matter in the intelligible and in the sensible world, contrary to Plotinus' own stated intention[20].

"Participation"

It is true that the soul's "formation" of matter entails a paradox, for Plotinus also tells us that matter "cannot be formed"[21].

The paradox whereby matter "cannot be formed" and yet soul "covers matter with form" is deliberate[22]. Because matter is pure potentiality and (in that sense) "non-being", the soul's activity in covering matter with form can never be assured of more than a partial success[23]. In the sensible world (as distinct from what happens in the

[18] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 12-23. Plotinus writes of the matter of the sensible world (5. 18): καὶ ἡ μορφὴ δὲ εἴδωλον. And of intelligible matter (5. 19): ἐκεῖ δὲ ἡ μορφὴ ἀληθινόν. I assume that the form which is an "image" (5. 18) has for its original the form which is "true" (5. 19).

[19] Plotinus writes, *enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 12-15: διάφορόν γε μὴν τὸ σκοτεινὸν τό τε ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς τό τε ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ὑπάρχει, διάφορός τε ἡ ὕλη, ὅσῳ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τὸ ἐπικείμενον ἀμφοῖν διάφορον. It is a mere commentator's gloss to paraphrase ὅσῳ καὶ [...] διάφορον as an "explicit" statement that the difference in question is the "only" difference between intelligible matter and the matter of the sensible world (see the quotation from Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 172, at the head of this paragraph).

[20] See the final paragraphs of the chapter preceding this.

[21] *Enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 22 (μορφοῦσθαι μὴ δυνάμενον).

[22] Matter « cannot be formed (μορφοῦσθαι μὴ δυνάμενον) » (*enn.* II 5 [25] 5. 22). Soul « covers matter with form (ἐμόρφωσε) » (*enn.* III 9 [13] 3.16); see also ἐμόρφωσεν (*enn.* IV 3 [27] 9. 26).

[23] This is the conclusion implied by the final chapter of Plotinus' treatise *On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"* (*enn.* II 5 [25] 5). The same conclusions

intelligible world) matter and form are never one[24]. Matter cannot "adhere" to form[25]. It cannot "swallow" the forms (in the way that Intellect can "swallow" the forms of the intelligible world; the image is taken from Plotinus' interpretation of the myth of Kronos who "swallows" his children)[26]. The form with which soul covers matter remains an "appearance" only[27].

The soul (we might paraphrase) does her best to cover matter with form, but her best is never good enough, because the object of her attentions can never cease to be what it was: non-being, pure potentiality.

Corrigan again fails to master this aspect of Plotinus' theory. He writes: « O'Brien is very much mistaken in thinking that lower matter has no "participation" in the Intelligible »[28]. But I am sorry to have to tell Mr Corrigan that Plotinus himself shares in my error. All the expressions that I have quoted ("swallowing", "adhering to", being "one", an "appearance") are Plotinus' own answer to the question which he himself formulates: how can matter « participate without participating »[29]? And

spring from Plotinus' analysis of the "impassibility" of matter, in the relevant chapters of his treatise *On the impassibility of incorporeals* (*enn.* III 6 [26] 10-14). The quotations which follow will be taken from this latter treatise.

[24] Matter and form are never one; see esp. *enn.* III 6 [26] 12. 3. This is also the point which underlies Plotinus' insistence that forms are present in the matter of the sensible world as mere "echos" (14. 24-26) or "reflections" (14. 31-36; cfr. 14. 1-5). On the difference between the matter of the sensible world and intelligible matter, in relation to form, see *enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 12-23. In the intelligible world, matter and form do make up « a single nature » (*enn.* II 5 [25] 3. 15-18: ἄμφω δὲ μία φύσις).

[25] « Adhere (κολλᾶσθαι) », *enn.* III 6 [26] 14. 23. I am quoting here only some of Plotinus' more striking images; to grasp the point of these images, it is of course necessary to read the context as a whole (*i.e. enn.* III 6 [26] 10-14).

[26] « Swallow » (καταποθέν, κατεπόθη, 14. 26-29). Intellect «swallows» its children (cfr. καταπιόντα), see *enn.* V 1 [10] 7. 27-35.

[27] An « appearance » only (οἷον δοκεῖν), *enn.* III 6 [26] 11. 30-31.

[28] CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

[29] *Enn.* III 6 [26] 14. 21-22 (θαῦμα τὸ χρῆμα γίγνεται, πῶς μὴ μετέχον μετέχει). See also p. 23 note 31 above. "Swallowing" (καταποθέν, κατεπόθη) and "adhering to" (κολλᾶσθαι), 14. 23 and 26-29. The other two expressions are, admittedly, taken from earlier chapters: being "one" (matter and form are never one), cap. 12. 3; an "appearance" only (οἷον δοκεῖν), cap. 11. 30-31. But Plotinus' point here is essentially the same.

the answer to that question is to be found in a process that is « explicitly distinguished from, and falls short of, "participation" »[30].

"... AND THEN THERE WAS ONE"

Once the point about "participation" has been grasped, the distinction between Corrigan's "cosmic" and "pre-cosmic" matter becomes no more (no less, if you like) than the distinction between the soul's generation of matter and her covering of matter with form. The soul generates non-being, and then « by a second initiative » covers the object she has made with form[31]. Matter thus "becomes" body, even though there

[30] « In his treatise *On the impassibility of incorporeals*, Plotinus does conclude that matter, in his own philosophy, has to "participate somehow" (μεταλαμβάνειν ἀμηγέπη) in goodness. But the qualification is all important. Plotinus argues that since matter cannot be "changed" (ἀλλοιοῦσθαι) without thereby ceasing to be matter and evil, it therefore only "appears" to participate (δοκεῖν), and does not do so "really" (ὄντως). Later in the same treatise, Plotinus again writes that nothing can "wholly fail to participate" in goodness (πάντη μὴ μετέχειν). He therefore asks how matter can "participate without participating" (πῶς μὴ μετέχον μετέχει). The solution is found in a process that is explicitly distinguished from, and falls short of, "participation" (cf. μετασχοῦσα) ». The quotations are all taken from the treatise *On the impassibility of incorporeals*, *enn.* III 6 [26]: cap. 11, esp. 31, 34, 37-38 and 42; and cap. 14. 18 sqq., esp. 18-19, 21-22 and 26 sqq. In the first quotation (11. 38) ἀμηγέπη is transcribed from Henry and Schwyzer's *editio maior*; in their *editio minor* (see p. 14 note 5 above), the same authors write ἀμηγέπη. — These words are as true now as they were nearly ten years ago, when I first penned them in my garden in Cambridge, as part of my article on *Plotinus and the Gnostics*. See p. 110 for the quotation (unhappily transliterated by the editor), and p. 120 for the references. Corrigan travesties my intentions (and those of Plotinus) when he takes the sentences I have quoted as a flat denial of any kind of participation. (See the sentence quoted at the head of my paragraph, CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, p. 177: « O'Brien is very much mistaken in thinking that lower matter has no "participation" in the Intelligible ». Corrigan writes earlier on the same page: « O'Brien argues that sensible matter cannot "participate" ».) The reader need only look back at the words I have transcribed at the beginning of this footnote to see what a wanton simplification this is of the accurate and careful paraphrase which I gave of Plotinus' thought on this question. Plotinus' whole analysis (*enn.* III 6 [26] 10-14) is deliberately designed to avoid both a flat denial and an unqualified assertion of the thesis that the matter of the sensible world "participates" in form. See also the footnote at the end of this chapter (p. 74 note 35 below).

[31] *Enn.* III 9 [13] 3; esp. 3. 15-16.

has been no real transformation of matter[32]. The object which the soul has generated is an « offspring without life »[33]. The matter of the sensible world remains « a corpse adorned »[34].

Corrigan's three (or more) manifestations of "lower" matter thus reduce to one only. At the end of chapter five of his treatise *On matter*, Plotinus is not talking of "lower" matter at all. When he does talk of "lower" matter it is true that we can distinguish matter considered in isolation from its covering of form. But this is not a distinction between two different kinds or manifestations of matter. It is one and the same "matter" which is generated by soul, and which soul then covers with form, in order to provide the bodies which we see and feel around us in the sensible world[35].

[32] I here associate *enn.* III 9 [13] 3 (the soul covers matter with form) and *enn.* III 4 [15] 1 (matter "becomes body" by its reception of form); on the juxtaposition of these two passages, see ch. I and ch. II above.

[33] *Enn.* III 4 [15] 1; esp. 1. 7.

[34] *Enn.* II 4 [12] 5. 18: see p. 24 note 36 above.

[35] The point about "participation" (« how can matter participate without participating? », *enn.* III 6 [26] 14. 21-22; see p. 73 note 30 above) is anticipated in the passage I have already mentioned from the treatise *On the descent*, where even matter which does not "participate" nonetheless does not stand wholly "apart" (*enn.* IV 8 [6] 6. 16-23; see ch. I above). Corrigan tells me that I have no right to juxtapose the teaching of these two treatises. He writes, *op. cit.*, p. 177 note 28: « Apparent evidence from III, 6 (26th treatise in the chronological order) cannot on its own be used to prove the contention that in IV, 8 (6th in the chronological order) Plotinus could not have spoken of matter's participation ». Very curiously, Corrigan fails to tell his reader that I had explicitly noted, but discounted, the possibility that « there has been a change of view between the writing of the 6th and 26th treatises » (*Plotinus and the Gnostics*, p. 111). Several authors have attempted to discover changes of doctrine (an "evolution" even) in Plotinus' thinking in the course of the *Enneads* (see *Plotinus on evil*, p. 122 *sub finem*); none has yet succeeded. If Corrigan is not being merely (and rather stupidly) waspish, and if he really thinks that treatises 6 and 26 in the chronological order are inconsistent, then he must say so, and prove it. He must then also withdraw the explicit conjunction of the same two treatises proposed (without any apparent awareness of the possibility of change, or evolution, in Plotinus' thought) at the end of his own article, where, for good measure, he throws in the 51st treatise as well. Corrigan writes, p. 180: « In conclusion, even if matter is ultimately impervious to all reality (III, 6), it is nonetheless present in compounds, while in its own nature falling utterly below the level of form. Therefore, the two hypotheses of IV, 8, 6 reflect these two senses of the term matter, just as in I, 8, 14 the argument treats first of matter's eternal presence and its illumination, and secondly of its generation (cf. "following upon" in IV, 8, 6) as a result of prior realities. Hence, both the hypotheses of IV, 8, 6 refer to lower matter ». Why, in this paragraph, is Corrigan justified in taking together the teaching of three treatises almost as far apart in time as they could be (*enn.* IV 8 is the 6th treatise; *enn.* III 6 is the 26th; and *enn.* I 8 is the 51st), while my juxtaposition of the first two treatises in the same sequence (IV 8 [6] and III 6 [26]) is thought to be matter for reprobation? Can it possibly be that, since Corrigan does not include Porphyry's chronological numeration in his references to Plotinus (a slipshod practice which I hope future writers in « Phronesis » will avoid), he is not therefore really very much aware of the chronological sequence of the treatises which now make up the *Enneads*, — except in the one case where I had drawn attention to it?

* *

Dare I hope that the reader begins to see the light of dawn, to feel upon his brow the breezes of returning sanity?

Plotinus does not ask the impossible. His thought may be difficult. His expression may be obscure. But to understand the relation of matter to form in the philosophy of the *Enneads*, we are not asked to believe that a matter which "receives light" is "everlastingly unlit", nor are we asked to believe that there exists a "precosmic" matter for a world which has no beginning in time.

Chapter VII

CORRIGAN ON SOUL

"The soul of the all"

There remains a further paradox in the passages I have quoted. In *Puzzles about the soul*, the soul which, « in order to go forth », must provide for herself « place, and therefore also body », and which therefore « covers darkness with form » has earlier been said to be « the soul of the all »[1]. But in *Various investigations* the soul which « covers with form » the image she has made and « moves into it rejoicing » is explicitly stated to be a "partial" soul[2].

But this discrepancy, such as it is, is easily resolved in the light of Plotinus' more detailed account of soul and of souls. Thus in the treatise *On whether the stars act upon us*, Plotinus tells us that "the soul of the all" transmits her illumination through the medium of a lower soul[3]. When therefore we read, in *Puzzles about the soul*, that the soul of the all « covers darkness with form », we may properly conclude that she does so through the medium of some form of "partial" soul[4].

[1] *Enn.* IV 3 [27] 9. 20-29. See 9. 12: περὶ μὲν δὴ τῆς τοῦ παντός, *scil.* ψυχῆς.

[2] *Enn.* III 9 [13] 3. See esp. 3. 7: ἡ μερική, *scil.* ψυχή.

[3] *Enn.* II 3 [52] 9. 31-34 (Plotinus here speaks of ἡ τοῦ παντὸς ψυχὴ ἡ μὴ ἐν σώματι, ἐλλάμπουσα δὲ ἴχνη τῇ ἐν σώματι). The same distinction/association occurs in several other places in the *Enneads*.

[4] I thus conclude that Plotinus means there to be no contradiction between *enn.* III 9 [13] 3 (a "partial" soul) and *enn.* IV 3 [27] 9. 20-29 ("the soul of the all"). But see also p. 80 note 18 below.

More specifically, in the final chapter of the same treatise, *On whether the stars act upon us*, we are explicitly told that "the final maker" (and perhaps, by implication, the maker of evils) is a "reflection" of "the soul of the all"[5]. This corresponds precisely to the division of labour in the treatises I have already commented upon in an earlier chapter[6]. In the treatise *On the origin and order of things which come after the first*, the soul which issues from Intellect generates an "image" of herself, which is said to be "sensation" and the "nature" which is found in plants; this, or so I have argued, is the same (lower) manifestation of soul which in *Various investigations* and in the opening chapter of *On the daimon* generates the "non-being" which is matter[7].

This trilogy of earlier treatises (*On the origin and order of things which come after the first, Various investigations, On the daimon*) gives the clue to the cryptic expression "the final maker" in the treatise *On whether the stars act upon us*. The "final maker" is most simply and easily taken as being the "partial" soul, which generates matter[8].

Or take the highly abbreviated remarks which conclude the second chapter of the treatise *On nature and contemplation and the One*[9]. "Nature" is here described as a « rational principle (λόγος) » whose "offspring" is a further and final "rational principle", which manifests itself as "visible form" but which is itself incapable of any further generative activity[10]. The implication is plain: here, as in the final chapter of the treatise *On whether the stars act upon us*, "nature" is "the final maker", for the forms which soul introduces into the material world are themselves incapable of further generative activity, except in so far as they are informed by soul[11].

[5] *Enn.* II 3 [52] 18; see esp. 18. 13 (ποιητὴς οὖν ἔσχατος οὗτος); 18. 12 (ἴνδαλμα); 18. 9 (τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ψυχήν).

[6] See ch. II, pp. 16-18 above.

[7] *Enn.* V 2 [11] 1-2; *enn.* III 9 [13] 3; *enn.* III 4 [15] 1. For my earlier use of these texts, see pp. 16-18 above.

[8] Cfr. *Plotinus on evil*, p. 128 note 6.

[9] *Enn.* III 8 [30] 2.

[10] I paraphrase thus 2. 27-34.

[11] As I have already hinted (pp. 22-3 above), the reader of the *Enneads* who is alert to the rôle of soul in the generation of matter will find many another passage which makes best sense when taken in the light of the interpretation I have put forward here.

But I digress. The intricacies in Plotinus' account of soul and souls require a delicacy and a subtlety of interpretation far beyond anything to be found in Corrigan's analysis of the origin of matter. And the distinctions which Plotinus introduces are in any case only indirectly relevant to the question in hand, for Plotinus nowhere writes of a generation of matter by anything other than the lowest manifestation of soul (« nature », « the soul which comes to be in plants » « partial soul »)[12].

Corrigan thinks otherwise, only because he has failed to master the precise meaning of the Greek in a couple of crucial passages, and so comes to persuade himself that there is a generation of matter by "pure soul" or by "the soul itself" independently of, and separately from, the generation of matter by "partial soul"[13].

[12] I know that my critics will pounce upon the claim that distinctions in Plotinus' account of soul can be only "indirectly relevant" to the question of the generation of matter, for there is of course a sense in which it can be objected that the philosophy of the *Enneads* is a seamless whole and that no part can ever be considered independently of any other part. Thus in *Plotinus on evil* I dared to claim in my introductory remarks (p. 116) that there were two "difficulties" (Plotinus' conception of « matter as total lack and as evil » and his presentation of « the descent of soul as a potential evil, and yet as required for the unfolding of its own powers and for the service of the sensible world ») which I considered to be "subordinate" to the question immediately in hand; whereupon Armstrong rounds upon me (in his article in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*, p. 189 note 30; for this colloquium see p. 22 note 25 above) for my « neglect of wider issues » and for « dismissing » questions which he considers « primary and fundamental ». Oh dear! Well yes, so they are, in the context of Plotinus' philosophy as a whole; they remain nonetheless "subordinate" to the problem which I had set myself to solve (in an article whose length must already have dismayed my editor), namely the precise causal nexus which determines the relation of matter and soul in Plotinus' conception of human evil. — But I know it is useless to protest. *De gustibus non disputandum*. I leave my reader to choose between the attempt to clarify limited and specific problems in the interpretation of the *Enneads* and the flaccid and fuzzy generalisations which other writers prefer to fill their pages with.

[13] CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, p. 174 (see the quotation attached to my next footnote but one).

"Pure soul"

Thus in the passage I have quoted from *Puzzles about the soul*, Plotinus writes that soul covers the darkness with form, « since the darkness existed (ἐπείπερ ὑπέστη) »[14]. Corrigan does not translate this sentence, but he writes by way of paraphrase that, in these words, « the notion that the pure soul generates matter is already implicit »[15].

But that notion is neither implicit nor explicit, unless (like Bréhier), we translate ὑπέστη as an active and transitive form of ὑφίστημι, « since the soul has made darkness »[16]. But to do so is to confuse ὑπέστη and ὑπέστησε. Plotinus writes ὑπέστη. This is not the active, transitive form of the verb (ὑπέστησε, "made to exist"), but an intransitive, passive form: "since it existed"/"since it came into being"[17].

It is this elementary error in the understanding of the Greek which leads Corrigan to claim that there is a generation of matter, not merely by a "partial" soul (in *Various investigations*), but also by a "pure soul" (in *Puzzles about the soul*). Once the Greek is translated correctly, Corrigan's thesis collapses[18].

[14] *Enn.* IV 3 [27] 9. 26.

[15] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

[16] É. Bréhier, *Plotin. Ennéades* (« Collection Budé »), IV, Paris 1927, *ad loc.* (p. 75: « a fait naître »).

[17] There is a certain amount of overlap between these two uses of the verb, in so far as the aorist middle (ὑπεστήσατο) is used in a transitive sense (and so more or less synonymously with ὑπέστησε, *enn.* V 5 [32] 5. 13; *enn.* VI 2 [43] 8. 19), while the perfect active (ὑφέστηκε) can be used intransitively (*enn.* VI 8 [39] 11. 33); but throughout the *Enneads* the distinction is quite clear between ὑπέστησε (transitive, "made to exist") and ὑπέστη (intransitive, "came to exist"). See Sleeman and Pollet, *Lexicon plotinianum*, *s.v.* ὑφιστάναι, col. 1070. (Sleeman and Pollet do quote, *s.v.*, c 2, a single example of ὑπέστη transitive; but to this they give a different sense: "submit oneself to", ὑπέστη [*scil.* ὁ Πλάτων] πολλὰς ἀπορίας, *enn.* III 6 [26] 12. 9.)

[18] It will be remembered (I hope) that I do think the idea of an independently existing matter is excluded in this passage by Plotinus' writing of the light which "becomes" darkness (*enn.* IV 3 [27] 9. 24-25; see ch. I above); and I would allow that the idea of *émanation intégrale*, and even the generation of matter by soul, is therefore implicit in this passage (cfr. *Plotinus on evil*, p. 128 note 6). What I do not believe is that Plotinus intends to introduce here a generation of matter by

"The soul itself"

No less elementary is the error whereby Corrigan seeks to attribute a generation of matter to "the soul itself" in the treatise *On evils*[19].

When Plotinus writes here of the soul's producing matter (the conditional sentence analysed in an earlier part of my study), he introduces the pronoun/pronominal adjective αὐτή: « even if the soul herself produced matter... (καὶ γὰρ εἰ αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχὴ τὴν ὕλην ἐγέννησε...) »[20]. The purpose of this αὐτή, in the context, is clearly to distinguish soul from matter: even if soul "herself" produced matter, it is still matter (and not soul) which is "primal" evil and cause of evil in the soul[21].

Is that how Corrigan has understood the expression? I fear not. When he writes, for example, that in this chapter « Plotinus makes αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχή the subject throughout », I have the very unhappy feeling that Corrigan has taken αὐτή to be used here in something like its philosophical sense, to mean that Plotinus is speaking of "the soul herself", as somehow different from its instantiations as a particular or "partial" soul, and not (which is what the context clearly requires) as meaning simply that the soul generates matter "herself"[22].

"pure" soul as distinct from a generation of matter by "partial" soul (as described in *enn.* III 9 [13] 3). — But I hope it will be clear that I am deliberately cutting myself off here from delving at all deeply into the nature of "soul" and of "souls" in the *Enneads* (cfr. p. 79 note 12 above). I would be the first to acknowledge that the several distinctions which Plotinus makes when talking of "soul" and of "souls" require a far more rigorous analysis than they have received hitherto. For the latest (unsatisfactory) summary of Plotinus' thought on the subject, see E. K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on sense-perception: a philosophical study*, Cambridge 1988, pp. 23-5 (these pages are entitled *Synopsis of the theory of souls*).

[19] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-6. Corrigan writes of « pure soul » (p. 174), « soul itself » (pp. 174 and 176) and « intelligible soul » (p. 176). See also the footnote following this.

[20] *Enn.* I 8 [51] 14. 51. See ch. I above. Corrigan writes, p. 175: « It is possible for αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχή to refer either to the intelligible soul in general or to the world soul, but with the understanding (supplied by the context) that it is the pure soul in the first moment of the discourse of proceeding ».

[21] *Ibid.* 14. 49-54. For my understanding of this passage, see *Plotinus on evil*, pp. 135-9.

[22] Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 175. For the "philosophical" use of αὐτός, see Liddell, Scott, Jones, *A Greek-English lexicon*, Oxford 1940[9], *s.v.*, I 4.

If Corrigan has not misunderstood the expression in that way, then there is no other foundation for his belief that "soul" in this chapter of the treatise, as in the passage from *Puzzles about the soul*, is a "pure soul", for Plotinus himself, earlier in the chapter, has told us exactly the opposite[23]. The soul which becomes entangled with matter, and whose relationship with matter Plotinus is here concerned to analyse and to describe, is explicitly said *not* to be the soul which is "pure" and "separated" and "apart from matter"[24].

Ruit tota thesis

I could continue for many pages more with the sad litany of Corrigan's errors and misunderstandings; but is it really necessary?

Once we have cleared away the theory of "unlit" matter in the intelligible world, we have cleared away one of the three "generations" of matter which populate Corrigan's pages, namely the generation of lower matter from "otherness" and from "primal movement". Matter which, in chapter five of the treatise *On matter*, is generated from "otherness" and from "primal movement" is solely and exclusively the matter of the intelligible world.

[23] *Enn.* I 8 [51] 14. 17-24. See also the following footnote.

[24] *Ibid.* 14. 17-24. The « weakness (ἀσθένεια) » which Plotinus analyses from here to the end of the chapter is specifically said to belong to souls « engaged in matter (ἐν ταῖς ἐνύλοις, *scil.* ψυχαῖς) » (14. 18), and not to apply to souls which are « wholly separate (ἐν ταῖς χωρισταῖς παντελῶς, *scil.* ψυχαῖς) » (14. 18) and « apart from matter (ἐν ταῖς χωρὶς ὕλης) » (14. 19) and « pure (*ibid.*: καθαραί) ». — Corrigan has been misled by Plotinus' later mentioning that the source which "illumines" matter « does not see matter because of the evilness of matter (μὴ ὁρᾷ διὰ κάκην) » (cfr. 14. 40). Corrigan has taken this as referring necessarily and exclusively to "the pure soul" (p. 174). But the "illumination" of matter can as well be the work of the "partial" soul as of "the soul of the all" (see p. 77 note 3 above). — Incidentally, the soul's "not seeing" matter in this context is not inconsistent with the "partial" soul "seeing" the object it has made (*enn.* III 9 [13] 3. 15: ἰδοῦσα). "The soul of the all" also "sees" matter or darkness (*enn.* IV 3 [27] 9. 26: again, ἰδοῦσα). But the "seeing" of matter/darkness is only « a kind of seeing (οἷον ὁρᾷ) », just as for Plato the "reasoning" by which we come to grasp the receptacle is only « a bastard reasoning (νόθῳ λογισμῷ) »: see *enn.* II 4 [12] 10 (the two quotations, 10. 11 and 17). Plat. *Tim.* 52 B 2.

Equally chimaerical is Corrigan's attempted distinction between "cosmic" and "precosmic" matter. The soul generates non-being, and then, "by a second initiative", covers the object she has made with form. These are not two "generations" of matter, but (logically) successive acts in the soul's production of the cosmos. The soul first makes matter, and then covers with form the object she has made.

And finally, once we have weeded out a few elementary errors in the understanding of the Greek, then any notion of "pure soul", or of "the soul itself", generating matter melts away, leaving a single generation of matter by "partial" soul (in *Various investigations*), a manifestation of soul which will be the same as or will overlap with the sensitive and vegetative soul (in the treatise *On the daimon who has taken charge of us*).

The whole rambling and ramshackle edifice of three (or more) "matters", and of three (or more) "generations", collapses, leaving hardly a trace[25].

[25] « Hardly a trace »: there is a genuine problem in understanding Plotinus' interpretation of the birth of Eros in the *Symposium* (*On Eros*: *enn.* III 5 [50] 5 sqq.). This text occupies the final five pages of Corrigan's article (pp. 177-81). Plotinus does here attribute intelligible matter to *daimones* (6. 44), in order to explain how it is that *daimones* cannot be grasped by the senses (they are, under normal circumstances, invisible, inaudible, etc.), although they are present in the sensible world (6. 35-45). This is a use of intelligible matter apparently without precedent in the *Enneads*, but Corrigan quite fails to take the measure of this text, for he seems not to recognise that what is anomalous in this chapter of the treatise *On Eros* is the presence of intelligible matter in the sensible world, whereas what is peculiar to Corrigan's interpretation of matter in the *Enneads* is the presence of "sensible" matter in the intelligible world (see my summary of his thesis, ch. IV above, and also the beginning of ch. V). The simplest interpretation of *enn.* III 5 [50] 6 is that it is an *ad hoc* answer to a problem which is not raised, in these terms, elsewhere in the *Enneads*.

Chapter VIII

ENVOI

Just two remarks before I leave, one personal and one more general.

A plea for scrupulousness

A personal remark. Corrigan would obviously like to have caught me out in my analysis of Plotinus. And for that I bear him no ill-will at all. Indeed I even feel for him a kind of sympathy in reverse, for I could hardly lay my hand on my heart and swear that I had myself always and everywhere been innocent of the pleasures of the chase. Moreover, in the present case at least, the victim is a willing one, for (to state the obvious) I would *like* to be shown to have made a mistake in my reading of Plotinus, for then I should have learnt something.

The trouble is that, in wanting to prove me wrong, Corrigan gets side-tracked into attributing to me opinions which I have never held, for these prove much easier to refute than anything which I have actually written.

Corrigan has an illustrious predecessor here: J. M. Rist who, in another criticism of my article *Plotinus on evil*, accuses me of regarding matter, in Plotinus, as a "substance"[1]. I will gladly offer a copy of

[1] J. M. Rist, *Plotinus and Augustine on evil*, in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*, cit., p. 499 (for this colloquium, see p. 22 note 25 above). For Rist's accusation, see also the footnote following this.

my latest publication (volume one of *Études sur Parménide*, Paris 1987) to anyone who can substantiate that claim from anything I have written. I must however warn any would-be applicant for this very desirable free gift (otherwise available from most booksellers at the bargain price of only 660 French francs for vols I and II together) that he will have his work cut out to unearth the damning quotation, for in the article in question I wrote in fact exactly the opposite. Evil (which for Plotinus is identical with matter), Plotinus does not believe « exists as a substance »[2].

Corrigan's Aunt Sally is just as fictitious. I am said to regard both sensible and intelligible matter as a "static substratum", and that, my critic tells me with wagging finger, « will just not do »[3]. But where

[2] *Plotinus on evil*, pp. 119-20: « Trouillard is right of course in saying that the opposition between good and evil in Plotinus is not that of *deux substances*. For Plotinus does not believe that evil exists as a substance ». In a footnote (p. 120 note 1) I refer to the translation given earlier (pp. 114-15) of a number of passages from the treatise *On evils* where Plotinus plainly excludes the idea that matter or "evil" can properly be said to exist as a substance (for example he concludes, *enn.* I 8 [51] 3. 38: « This is the substance of evil, if indeed there can be any substance of evil »: see also 3. 12-16 and 5. 5-12). Can I really hope to make things clearer than that? — Rist's remark is the more foolish in that he acknowledges (though he gives no reference for) my explicit disclaimer that matter, for Plotinus, can be regarded as a substance (see the preceding footnote: « Although O'Brien says he does not believe that Plotinus regards matter as a separate substance... »), but nonetheless concludes that I mean the opposite of what I say: « ... that is the implication which must be drawn from his analysis ». He concludes: « Thus for O'Brien "we" are distinct from matter as two virtually independent substances which can interact upon each other ». In the offending passage (*Plotinus on evil*, p. 127) I had in fact written: « Consciously or unconsciously, Rist is following in the footsteps of the youthful Armstrong. Both try to approximate Plotinus' thought to the ideas of contemporary and later thinkers. For Origen, Augustine and Proclus, but not for Plotinus, matter is good or neutral, and "we" are the only source of sin ». From this one might properly conclude that matter, for Plotinus, is neither good nor neutral. One might further conclude that matter, for Plotinus, is evil. But nothing in the words which I have quoted, nor anything in the context surrounding, gives even the slightest pretext for concluding that, on the interpretation which I had proposed, « Plotinus regards matter as a separate substance ». Rist's assertion of the contrary is, I sadly fear, an example of wilful and petulant *méchanceté*.

[3] CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, p. 167. See also p. 180 note 33.

did I ever give utterance to this view? Again, my latest publication and a handsome bound copy of *Pour interpréter Empédocle* to anyone who can discover the incriminating passage[4].

A PLEA FOR CLARITY

And now my second, final and more general remark. The main fault in Corrigan's thesis I have not really touched upon. It is that Corrigan produces a vast proliferation of pseudo-Plotinian jargon which has very little relation, if any at all, to the passages which he quotes or is commenting upon. Thus he writes of matter (twice) as « an infinite field of discontinuity »[5], as « an eternally progressive unfolding of its nothingness »[6], of « soul matter »[7], of « intellect matter »[8], of « a sort of double field theory of matter »[9], of « a qualified thing, which in Plotinus' analysis ultimately discloses itself as a field of negative influence »[10], of matter as possessing « a negative polarity to which every object in its field is in process of infinite approximation »[11], of matter as « anti-substance and an antisubstantial whole »[12], and (perhaps most puzzling of all) of matter as a « universe of discourse »[13].

All these periphrases serve merely to confuse the reader, as I suspect they have already served to confuse their author. Plotinus is already obscure and difficult enough; but Plotinus' obscurities and difficulties are at least an intrinsic part of his attempt to think about and argue

[4] And if the passage cannot be found, then why should I ever be supposed to have thought it? Like most people, I mean what I say. And unlike some, I say what I mean.

[5] CORRIGAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 168 and 181.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 180 note 33.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 181 note 35.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

through a number of tricky philosophical questions which, in the third century, already had an intricate and tangled past. The modern commentator is not living in the third century, he is not Plotinus, and he should not write as if he were. Indeed the reverse: because Plotinus himself is an obscure and difficult author, any commentator worth his salt should labour to be as clear and precise as possible. Whereas to make any sense at all of Corrigan's article, I have had to read and re-read it as many times as I would have had to read and re-read some hitherto undiscovered treatise of Plotinus himself.

I hope Corrigan will not take that last remark as a compliment. It is not meant as one[14].

[14] There remains the question whether such claptrap would ever have been published in an English-language journal with an English editor if the subject had been Plato or Aristotle or even one of the Presocratics, and not Plotinus. For the sorry state of Plotinian and Neoplatonic studies in the ancient universities of England, see my brief remarks, *Neoplatonic studies in England: a plea for rigour*, « Revue de philosophie ancienne », IV (1986) pp. 299-303.

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245 C sqq. 36.

Respublica
382 A 4 18 note 15.

Sophista
237 A sqq. 17-18.
237 B 7-8 18 note 14.
237 B 10 sqq. 18 note 14.
254 D sqq. 17 note 13; 24 note 38.
254 D 1 18 note 15.
258 D 6 18 note 15.
258 E 3 18 note 15.
258 E 6-259 A 1 18 note 14.
263 D 4 18 note 15

Timaeus
52 B 2 82 note 24.

PLOTINUS

Enneades [1]

[1] For the two editions of the *Enneads* by P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer (*editio maior* and *editio minor*), see above p. 14 note 5. — References to the *Enneads* are given as follows: the upper-case Roman figure refers to the number of the *Ennead* (I to VI); the arabic figure which follows refers to the number of the treatise within each *Ennead* (1 to 9); the figure enclosed in square brackets refers to the chronological ordering of the treatises, as recorded in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* (54 treatises in all, according to Porphyry); the figure following refers to the chapters of each *Ennead*, as established by Marsilius Ficinus in his Latin translation of the *Enneads* (Florentiae 1492); and the final figure refers to the lineation of the chapters in the *editio maior* of Henry and Schwyzer (it is sometimes claimed that the lineation is the same in Bréhier's Budé edition of the *Enneads*, but this is not the case). Thus (in my first reference) I 8 [51] 3. 3-9 refers to lines three to nine of the third chapter of the eighth treatise of the first *Ennead*, which according to Porphyry was the fifty-first treatise in the order of composition. — For the sake of readers as innumerate as myself, I have also given in this Index, and frequently in the course of my analysis, the titles of the treatises as given in Porphyry's *Life* and in the manuscripts of the *Enneads*. Where there could be no possible confusion, I have sometimes given these titles in an abbreviated form in the course of my analysis. (For example, I sometimes refer to the treatise *On what evils are and where they come from* as the treatise *On evils*.)

I 8 [51]
On what evils are and where they come from
3. 3-9 16-18.
3. 12-16 86 note 2.
3. 38 86 note 2.
5. 5-12 86 note 2.
14 21-2; 29; 39-41; 74 note 35; 81-2.

II 1 [40]
On the universe
1 sqq. 61 note 8.

II 3 [52]
On whether the stars act upon us
9. 31-34 77.
18 78.

II 4 [12]
On matter
1. 14-18 64-5.
2. 1 64-5.
5 24-5; 28 note 3; 28-9; 37-8; 44 note 2; 48 note 15; 48 note 17; 53-4; 59-60; 62-3; 64-5; 70-1; 71-3; 74.
6. 1 64-5.
8 sqq. 30 note 13.
10 82 note 24.
12. 34-37 30 note 13.
See also 18 note 16 (cap. 6-16); 23 note 32 (cap. 15-16); 64-5 (the structure of the treatise).

II 5 [25]
On the meaning of "in potency" and "in act"
3. 15-18 72 note 24.
4 33-4.
5 18 note 15; 23 note 32; 29 note 5; 30-4; 35-8; 44 note 2; 46; 47; 59-60; 60-1; 63; 71-3.
See also 18 note 16 and 34 note 28 (cap. 4-5).

II 7 [37]
On mixture through and through
3. 30 note 13.

II 9 [33]
Against the Gnostics
3. 15-18 20-1; 68-9.
5. 33-36 68-9.

8. 20-25 — 21 note 22; 24 note 35.
12. 39-44 — 20-1.
See also — 20 note 19 (cap. 10-12); 20 note 20 (vituperation of the Gnostics in cap. 6 and cap. 8-10).

III 2 [47]
On providence (book one)
1. 15 sqq. — 61 note 8.

III 4 [15]
On the daimon who has taken charge of us
1 — 16-18; 23; 24 note 35; 25 note 46; 28-30; 43 note 1; 49 note 25; 50-2; 52-3; 60-1; 70 note 15; 74 note 32; 74 note 33; 77-8; 83.

III 5 [50]
On Eros
5 sqq. — 83 note 25.
6 — 83 note 25.

III 6 [26]
On the impassibility of incorporeals
6. 46-48 — 24 note 36.
7. 3-5 — 30 note 13.
7.12-13 — 18 note 15.
10 — 34 note 28.
11 — 23 note 33.
12. 9 — 80 note 17.
14. — 18 note 17; 23 note 31.
19. 17 sqq. — 24 note 35.
See also — 18 note 16, 71-3 and 74 note 35 (cap. 10-14, on the theory of matter and the nature of "participation"); 74 note 35 (quotation from Corrigan).

III 8 [30]
On nature and contemplation and the One
2 — 78.

III 9 [13]
Various investigations
3 — 16-18; 23; 24 note 35; 25 note 46; 28-30; 49-50; 50-2; 52-3; 55-8; 68-9; 70-1; 71-3; 73-5; 77-9; 80; 82 note 24; 83.

IV 3 [27]
Puzzles about the soul (book one)
9. 12-20 — 61 note 9.
9. 20-29 — 19-20; 68-9; 71-3; 77-9; 80; 82 note 24.
10. 5-9 — 20 note 18.
See also — 47 note 14 (cap. 9. 12-26, quotation from Corrigan).

IV 4 [28]
Puzzles about the soul (book two)
22 sqq. — 25 note 46.

IV 7 [2]
On the immortality of the soul
2-3 — 15-16.
9. 23-24 — 24 note 36.

IV 8 [6]
On the descent of soul into bodies
3. 19-21 — 20 note 18.
6. 16-23 — 23-5; 74 note 35.

V 1 [10]
On the three hypostases which rank as principles
2. 5 — 24 note 36.
2. 25-26 — 20 note 19; 24 note 36.
3 — 21 note 22.
7 — 15-16; 72.

V 2 [11]
On the origin and order of things which come after the first
1. 18-21 — 16; 51 note 30.
2. 4-5 — 16.
2. 29-30 — 16; 51 note 30.
See also — 78 (cap. 1-2).

V 4 [7]
How from the first there comes what is after the first, and on the One
2. 27-33 — 21 note 22.

V 5 [32]
That the intelligibles are not outside the Intellect, and on the Good
5. 13 — 80 note 17.

VI 2 [43]
On the kinds of being (book two)
8. 19 80 note 17.

VI 8 [39]
On the voluntariness and will of the One
11. 33 80 note 17.

VI 9 [9]
On the Good or the One
11. 35-38 18 note 17.

PORPHYRIUS

Sententiae
14 36.
26 56 note 47.

Vita Plotini
2 21 note 24.
3 18 note 17.
4 18 note 17.
6 21 note 24.
8. 1-4 44 note 3; 63 note 13.
16 20 note 20.

SIMPLICIUS

De caelo
25. 23 sqq. 20 note 20.

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